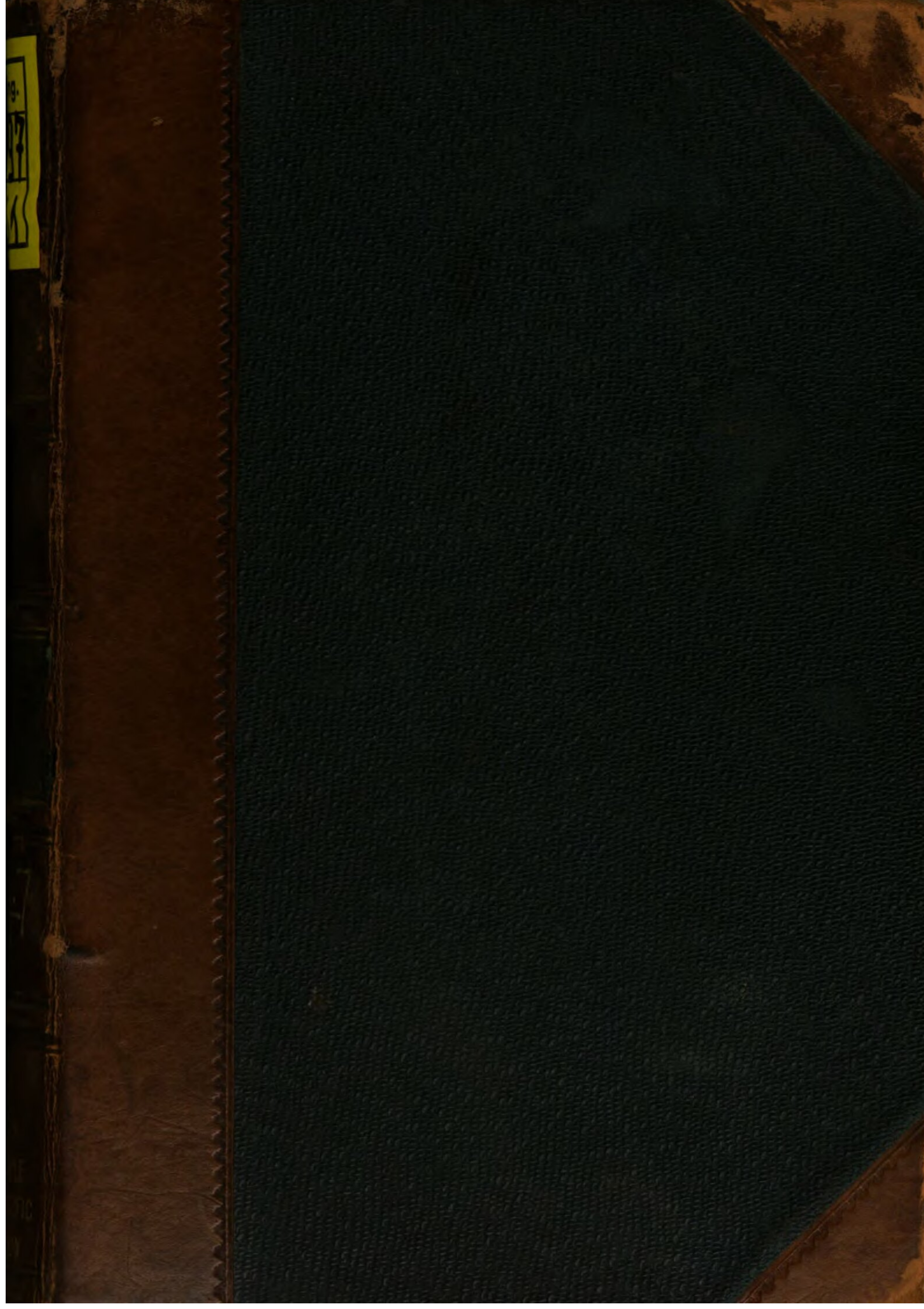




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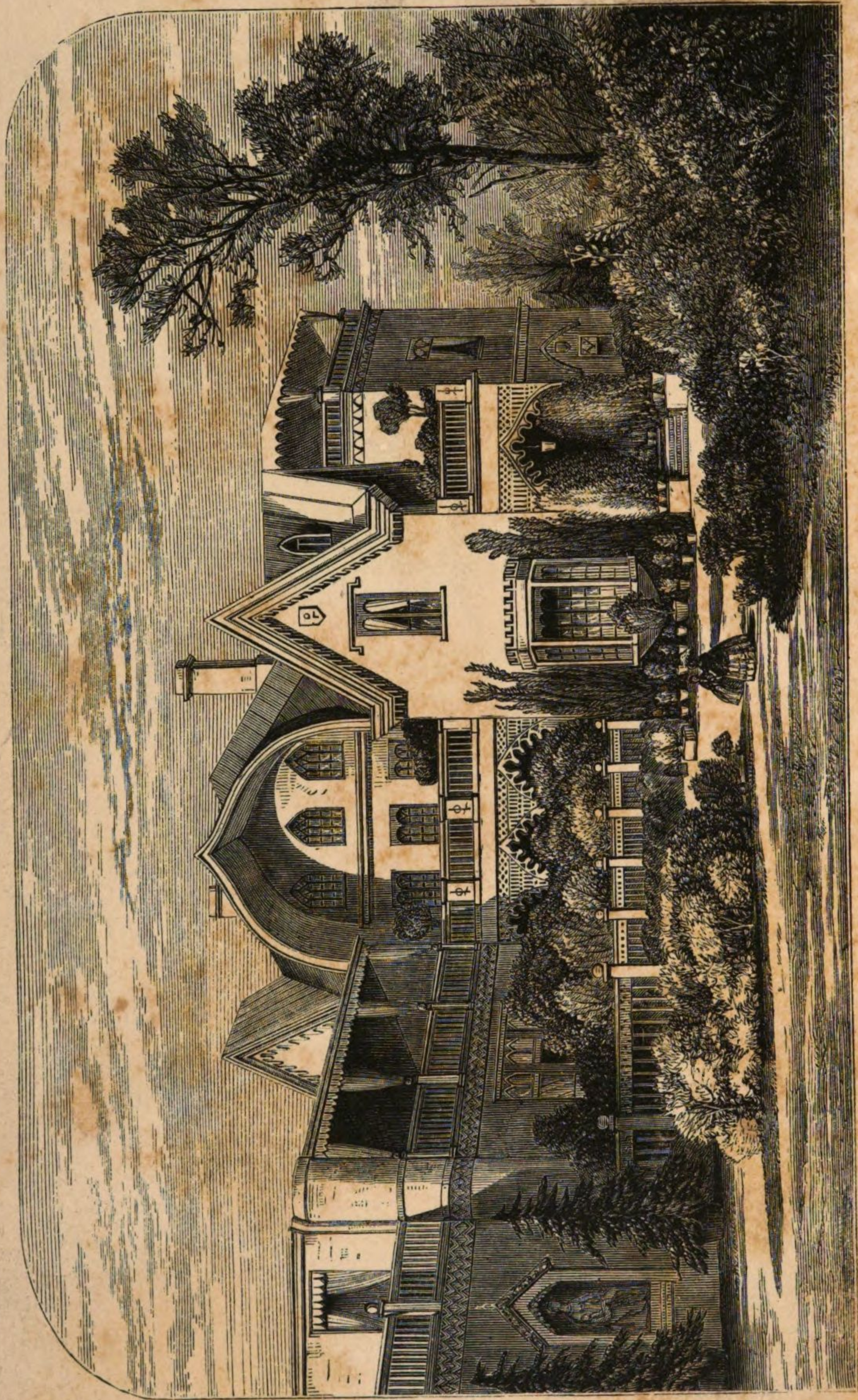
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IMPERIAL COTTAGE AT PETERHOF.

SIX YEARS'
TRAVELS IN RUSSIA.

BY

AN ENGLISH LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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SIX YEARS' TRAVELS IN RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

The Vladimir—A Curious Scene—The Guard-Ship—In at Russia's Front Door—First Glimpse of "L'étoile Polaire"—English Eccentricity and its Consequences—The Inquisitive Crow—A Happy Deliverance.

"SLIFKY." "Sachar." "Bringt dieses Herrn B——" "Sucharie." "Daë tchaë." "Je vous remercie, j'en ai suffisamment." "Hleb, pojaloui." "Dies ist für Madame G——" "L'ultima che si perde è la speranza, Signora." "Steward, have you any roast beef?" "Rost biff? ya, ya." "Ich trinke ihn ohne Zucker." "Merci, Monsieur, on connaît l'ami au besoin." "Tchelovec, daë porr-ter." "Tochass, tochass."*

* "Cream." "Sugar." "Take this to Mr. B——" "Rusks." "Give tea." "Thank you, I have enough." "Bread, please." "This is for Madame G——" "The

These were unusually hilarious sounds, which, issuing from the breakfast-table, greeted us in our distant cabin on awakening to that joyous morning, the fourth since we had left Stettin, and the last we were likely to pass on board the Vladimir. A heavy sea and high winds—the usual *avant courriers* of approaching winter in these latitudes—had beset our gallant vessel ever since she quitted the lagoon at the mouth of the Oder, terminating in a violent tussle in the Gulf of Finland, from which she was likely to have suffered severely but for a sudden change in the wind that enabled her to escape with comparatively small damage, such as the loss of some of her “gear,” a few bruises, breakages, tattered “gibs,” and the almost suspended animation of every female heart on board. But, happily, the fears and sorrows of the past night were merged in other feelings, in the unexpected—and to most of us unprecedented—scene which awaited our awakening in the morning.

As if fatigued with her exertions in the past encounter, the progress of the steamer was so even and slow as to be scarcely perceptible; and but for the *tremulo*—that obligato accompaniment—of the kneading engines, it would have been

last thing one loses is hope, Madam.” “I drink it without sugar.” “Thank you, sir, a friend in need is a friend indeed.” “Garçon, give porter.” “Directly, directly.”

difficult to say whether we progressed or not. From every rope hung a deep serrated fringe of ice; and from every block, icicles a foot long; the stiffened sails, glistening bulwarks, and still frozen decks, telling a startling tale of the dangers passed. Masses of Ladoga ice jostled each other roughly against the steamer's iron sides as she progressed gently on her way, ripping up with her prow the thinner ice surface of the frozen gulf waters. Vast piles of snow-laden clouds traversed the blue heavens, lending the hue of their own neutral tint to the icescape outspread beneath them, so that nature in her winter garb was difficult to define:—which the land, and, except in the vicinity of the vessel—which old Neptune's territory? The sun shone brilliant, but lukewarm. Yet, his rays glistening on every angle and prismsy speck of winter's filligrane, which seemed sewn with brilliants, gave beauty, and even animation, to the dull flat all around. No vestige of life, or moving thing, appeared beyond the narrow walls of our temporary home, save one solitary object, supposed to be a Hull or London boat, and which, in the dimness of distance, encrusted, stiffened, and glistening, and making scarcely any perceptible progress, might have been mistaken for some giant wonder of the microscopic world.

“Cronstadt! Cronstadt!” shouted several

voices at once, as, scarcely visible above the line of the horizon, and still considerably in advance of us, appeared a long flat streak, dotted with mole-hill-like elevations, which, clustering in greater numbers at one end of it, marked the site and fortress of the naval arsenal and entrepôt of that Imperial Palmyra to which we were bound. A little later, and we had arrived within hail of a formidable "three-decker," which towered like a fortress above the comparatively diminutive Vladimir: this was the Russian guard-ship, and here it is customary for all vessels, Constradt bound, to deliver up their rockets and fire-arms, which are duly returned to them on their way back. This precaution is for fear of fire; the Imperial fleet lying so contiguous to the harbour for merchantmen, that, were a fire to happen on either of them, the whole of the shipping at Cronstadt would be endangered; therefore, neither fire nor light is permitted on board any of them. Here we received a chief, and number of clerks. On board of the English steamers—at least those superlative ones belonging to the liberal house of Messrs. Gee, and Co., of Hull—it is the custom to regale these officials with oysters and London porter before they proceed to work. On such occasions, they dive down to the regions below in a great hurry, rubbing their hands and looking very happy. This, in a region where oysters are

ten pence a-piece, and porter three shillings a bottle, is doubtless anticipated as a kind of treat, and appreciated accordingly. But our's was a Russian boat, where no *bonne bouche* of the kind was to be expected, and so they dragged themselves below, and began, upon large sheets of double-necked eagle-surmounted paper, to describe some long story in Greek-like character, the caligraphy of several of which appeared to be finished specimens of the elegant art.

We drew near Cronstadt. The snow lay on the house-tops and in the streets, and the good folks of the place were to be seen hurrying to and fro in sledges, and enveloped to the nose in fur. The "first," or "little winter," as the Russians call it, had arrived long before it was expected or wanted, being, in the ordinary course of nature here, at least a month before the time. At this point, General V——, a Russian, and one of the most intelligent of our fellow passengers, drew our particular attention to the harbour, which is very spacious. It is divided into the Imperial harbour, for ships of war, the Imperial mole, and that set apart for merchantmen. Adjoining the Imperial harbour are the docks, capable of holding nine or ten line-of-battle ships; these are forty feet deep, and are lined with granite. The Imperial mole is a very wonderful construction, being built in the sea, and sur-

rounded by a rampart of granite, of stupendous thickness. This work was superintended by the late Admiral Greig, a Russo-Scotchman.

Our speed now began to slacken, and here we were to part company with that good ship which, almost like a thing of life, had brought us to the desired haven. The small transport which is to convey us to the capital is already alongside of us; and we are shipped, bag and baggage, dogs and custom-house officers.

Now fairly in at the front-door of Russia, and that door closed and doubly locked behind us, we float away on a lake-like expanse—the shallower waters of the Gulf of Finland, into which, sixteen miles higher up, the beautiful Neva debouches. We were about twenty-two English miles from the capital, and surrounded on all sides by a spacious perspective of waters, into which Cronstadt—now already far behind us—seemed gradually to sink—the land boundary, right and left, being still too far distant to define. Thus we progressed through an avenue of buoys, which marked our highway.

Having passed the bar formed by the junction of the Neva with the Gulf—the yellow bed of which, with certain winds, is occasionally left bare—the hitherto wide expanse of water becomes narrower, the land gradually closes in; far away over the bend of the river gleam tall gilt spires

whose taper points are lost to sight amid the rich azure of heaven; while domes and clustering cupolas, covered with gold, or silver, or blue, or green, spangled with stars, scintillated from afar,—the stupendous burnished domes of the colossal cathedral of St. Isaac shining out with a refulgence so dazzling as to be visible at a distance of forty versts. The indented shores, with here and there a patch of shingle and sand—Nature's own barriers—now give place to massive granite bulwarks of man's creation, which, clamped together with broad iron rivets, dictate bounds to the noble Neva. Broad quays, graceful churches, public buildings like palaces, and the princely dwellings of the nobility, on a grand majestic scale, form the bold perspective on either hand; while, in advance of the stranger, a fine cast-iron bridge, resting on many piers of Finnish granite, spans the broad blue stream. Far away through the perspective of its arches, the roving eye pursues the same line of architecture, catching, *en route*, glimpses of the Fortress, Exchange, and the Imperial Winter Palace. We are now in St. Petersburg! Yes, verily in the very heart of “l'étoile polaire,” that region of blue skies, palaces, and glittering cupolas, which, say what you like of pile and swamp, is surely without a rival among the cities of the earth!

Our shuffling *affaires* pyroscaffé, slackening her

speed, approached a covered landing-place; and as we "drew up," a novel scene presented itself in the picturesquely-costumed crowd of Russians, of all ranks, whom curiosity or interest had brought to witness the debarcation.

There were fine athletic young moujics, or peasants, well-conditioned and happy-looking, and comfortably clad in sheep-skin coats—the woolly side being innermost—and thick-soled capacious boots; officers of rank, as varied as their cast of features, and their uniforms; stout little women of the lower orders, attired in quilted cotton jackets of gay colours, with kerchief-covered heads and extraordinary short, rotund waists. Tradesmen of placid look and dignified mien, with flowing beards and long-skirted caftan, made way beside their more refined compatriots, in nominal bonnets and dropsical-looking fur-lined shubas or cloaks, to the rope barriers, which stretched from the landing, across the quay, to the custom-house, and along which the passengers defiled in lengthy procession, now ascending a short flight of outside steps to a large and comfortable waiting-room provided with numerous lounges.

As the wardrobe of our Russian friends was embaled in the imperials belonging to their travelling-carriage, which had been left at Cronstadt for transmission next day, there was no

need for their presence at the custom-house, and, therefore, they repaired to an hotel, whither we were to follow as soon as our luggage had passed through. Wishing to attest by our own experience how "the right of search" was conducted in these regions, we accompanied Mr. C—— to the Salle, just as some of our luggage was dragged forward for examination and the owners inquired for. Suffice it to say, that this formidable ordeal, which we had been given to understand was so vexatious, passed off more expeditiously and satisfactorily than any precedent of the kind we had experienced *en route* hither, through the principal countries of the Continent, that of Stettin alone excepted.

Our *douane* thus easily cleared, we prepared to follow our friends, whose hotel was described as being "only across the great Plain of St. Isaac," and, therefore, true to our English eccentricities as the needle to the pole, we determined to make the trajet of the great plain on foot, a proceeding which called forth the loudly-expressed surprise of more than one of our lady fellow-passengers who still lingered in the waiting-room.

"At this season," kindly suggested one of them, "walking is almost impossible, from the melting of the snow."

But we were not afraid of a little snow, and setting down her suggestion to the proverbial disincli-

nation of her sex and nation to long promenades—for, in this region of carriage transit, distance is computed by the revolution of wheels, and a Russian lady may be supposed to have about the same idea of a “constitutional” walk as the wife or daughter of a Chinese Mandarin—away we sped, leaving a servant to follow with the luggage in a cart, and soon found ourselves promenading along the clean dry pavement of the English quay, luxuriating in the delightful air and freedom of action after our recent imprisonment on board ship, congratulating ourselves in no humble strain on the superiority of our English habits, and expatiating upon our pretty general custom of accomplishing long walks, as if it were a heaven-born virtue, or a triumph over “the lusts of the flesh.” But egotism, like every child of pride, is sure to have a fall; and our’s was no exceptional case.

Having gained the last of a long line of princely mansions, we turned its corner, and debouched at once upon the splendid Plain of St. Isaac; catching at the same instant glimpses of large buildings, of spire and palace, of statuary and vistas of streets. Within a few feet of us uprose the well-known equestrian statue of Peter, upon its gigantic rock of unhewn granite; and, considerably in the distance, and dominating that entire plain, the majestic cathedral of St. Isaac, the

brilliant scintillation of whose colossal dome and quartette of attendant cupolas, all burnished with pure gold, we had seen as far off as Cronstadt. All this promised an abundant harvest for leisure exploration, but in the meantime a most unexpected dilemma surprised us, routing all present prospects of research, and reducing us to the most humble aspirations after any, the meanest, vehicle in St. Petersburg, even the cart that conveyed our luggage; but, alas! it had gone another way, and we now descried it traversing the plain in the distance. There lay the immense Place d'Isaac, weltering in glistening streams, for the brilliant sun sparkled on multitudinous lochs, and tributary rivulets, that intervened between us and that haven to which we were bound.

Not one dry spot presented itself large enough for a crow to stand upon, the crown of Peter's cast-iron pate excepted, and upon which, at that very moment, one of those droll city scavengers was very irreverently perched, and eyed us sideways with an expression, almost human, of intelligent curiosity. Mrs. C—— declared that he knew we were foreigners in a "fix." Nor was he far wrong if such were his ruminations. How often the advice of Punch's acute friend, Mrs. Partington, returned to my thoughts, viz:—"that those who go to Turkey should do as the Turkeys do." Oh, that we had availed ourselves

of the suggestion of our fellow-travellers, and made the trajet of the plain in an equipage, as other people did!

After exhausting attempts to navigate our way across, by leaping from one unslaked islet of half-frozen snow to another—often sinking ankle-deep in sludge—we at length happily arrived at a bit of still solid table-land, sufficiently large for all three to stand upon. Here we awaited, hopeful as shipwrecked cast-aways, for that “good time coming” which was to bring us deliverance on its wings. Sledges, droschkii, omnibuses, and equipages of all kinds, flashed past us—though at a considerable distance—with busy speed. None loitered by the way for “a fare,” but most of their occupants eyed us with some surprise, doubtless wondering what we were doing so far out of the grande route, and on foot. But necessity, that mother of invention and sharpener of the wits, helped to the discovery of what, at any other time, would have escaped our observation. This was a sledge and droschkii stand a long way off, on the opposite side of the plain. Mr. C——, taking off his hat, put it upon the point of his umbrella, and this he waved aloft as a signal of distress. Presently a train of three sledges and a couple of droschkii came splashing towards us. The long-bearded, long-caftaned drivers surrounded us, hat in hand, respectfully bowing, and,

in the ardour of their competition, jostling each other, and vociferating to us "cudà?" whither. Cudà vam oogodno? Whither does it please you? showing their white teeth at every word, as, with smiles and many words, the one pushed the other back, like boys at play.

Not comprehending any of these sonorous-sounding expletives, Mr. C—— helped us into the most comfortable-looking of the sledges, choosing for himself, by way of novelty, a curious turn-out; this was a kind of stuffed bench upon wheels, and capable of accommodating three persons, including the driver. We had, during our *séjour in duress* on the iceberg, noticed several pass, conveying women; the *tout ensemble* reminding one of three children on a headless wooden horse set upon wheels, the driver astride, and the two women behind him, mounted sideways as on horseback, and sitting on reverse sides of the vehicle, but one with her back to the horse's head.

We were now fairly in the hands of the strangers, who, by their sage-like bearing, their intelligent and friendly looks, at once evoked our confidence, and certainly our gratitude. Our venerable driver "tucked us up" all round, and covering us up with the sledge-cover—which, in the days of its youth, had been of handsome blue cloth, bound with bearskin, but now, like its

owner, was threadbare and worn—he mounted the strip of wood which served him for a “box seat,” and patiently awaited the signal to start, which he intuitively understood was to come from Mr. C——; who, having settled himself and his dressing-case on the wooden horse, leisurely hunted out certain Russian coins from among a handful of Victoria-headed silver pieces, his spruce young driver looking on with evident gratification, a new sixpence calling forth numerous rich-sounding ejaculations, which were redoubled when Mr. C—— placed it in his broad palm, at the same time pointing his forefinger against the man’s breast and calling out to him in English as loud as if he had been deaf:—“It is for you, I say it is for you,” adding besides, a silver rouble, —about three shillings,—for the hire of the two vehicles, which Mr. C—— made him comprehend by holding up his two fingers as the London omnibus conductors do. Fortunately we had taken the precaution to write down the address of the hotel, and as the young driver looked at it and pronounced the name of the same, we were satisfied he had been able to make it out.

With many bows and expressions of what we took to be thanks, the driver deposited his silver treasure in a leathern purse, which he thrust into his breast, and nimbly mounted to his seat, mut-

tering, for the benefit of his impatient plump little steed, a confidential "tochass, tochass," or directly, directly, while he delayed him a moment to tuck up the long skirts of his caftan—a dress somewhat like that of a blue-coat boy—out of the wet, he seized a rein in each hand—the universal mode of driving—and we were off "slap-dash" across the great plain.

A quarter of an hour's jolting "up hill and down dale," and slushing through the sludge, and tiny oceans and lakes—the water of which more than once threatened to overflow the shallow wooden barrier at our straw-embedded feet—and we turned into the court-yard of the hotel.

After dinner, and the recital of our adventure, followed an early tea, at which the gentlemen, three in number, including Mr. C——, —graceless man, so soon to forget his English training—smoked papiros, according to custom here, till our English brains were perfectly mystified, and tea, and "booter brot," and "sucharie," were all equally flavoured with scented tobacco, the most delicate kind certainly, being the choicest Turkey grown.

One of my Russian friends shared with me the same double-bedded room; but how we managed to pass the night upon the hardest of mattresses, with a sac-de-nuit a-piece for a pillow, and other particulars of the Russo-German hotel—in which

we were for that and the following night only to be located—must form the subject of a new chapter; for, weary and worn, with the tobacco-smoke still in mouth and throat, acting soporifically on one's eyelids, pardon me, in the meantime, bidding you a drowsy “good night.”

CHAPTER II.

Temperature of Russian Houses—Beds à la Russe—Picturesque
 Stove Lighter—Breakfast Arrangements—A Peep into
 the next Apartment—The Serf Visitors—Irene and the
 Cook—A Romantic Story—Irene's Secret.

WHO so well as an Englishman knows "the ills
 that flesh is heir to," when on a raw November
 night he sits looking admiringly into the rosy
 fire? Ever and anon he casts an anxious glance
 at the dial on the mantle-shelf, and wishes "Old
 Time" would just then accommodately slacken
 his speed, and still he lingers;—moment after
 moment flies on, but oh! how difficult to screw
 up his courage to vacate the luxurious lounge, be
 it by drawing-room or study fireside, where all is
 warmth and *couleur de rose*, for the desperate
 plunge into the chill air which pervades the
 rambling staircase, or intermediate corridor, ere

the distant bed-chamber be reached. It must be accomplished, however. And at length he is *en route*, while the flickering flame of the taper that he carries has shrunk into a mere dot of sickly hue, as its haste-stricken bearer strides on, with purple lip and chattering teeth attesting the full misery of this nightly ordeal. And would that this were all! It is but the prelude, however. For the cold stately "four-post," like a funeral-car in the foggy gloom of that spacious room, has yet to be entered; and surely there exists not a man, woman, or child in old England whose blood, even in the dog-days, does not chill at the bare recollection of those nightly *glissades* down the slippery gulf between the frozen sheets!

Let those best acquainted with such wintry horrors just imagine the Russian ladies gliding off to their dormitories at mid-winter, fluttering, like butterflies or sylphides, in summer attire of the thinnest possible texture, while a summer temperature reigns benignly around, penetrating the most distant corners of the house.

In regions like these, where the rare exotic flourishes luxuriantly, and every niche and window-sill contributes its bevy of variegated blossoms throughout the coldest season of the year, —till the very air one breathes bears a perfume like that wafted from an eastern *parterre*—the idea of numerous blankets to cover one in bed is ridicu-

lous. A small thin one is often superfluous, and as to "tucking-up," a fit of apoplexy would to a certainty be the result of such an experiment. Indeed it is almost indifferent how or where one reposes, but, the harder and more scantily clothed, the more refreshing. Hence, domestics fling themselves down to take their rest upon the cool polished floor of an anti-room; and a fastidious German waiting-maid — the "pampered menial" of these climes—thinks it an agreeable change occasionally to make her bed—though of course by stealth—on the satin-covered lounge, or settee, in the boudoir or drawing-room of her mistress.

The native traveller in Russia carries his bed along with him. This consists of numerous down or feather cushions, or large square pillows—sections of a bed, in fact—consequently there is rarely any other provision made for him at the city hotel or wayside inn than a naked French bedstead and mattress, upon which to spread his several large cushions. Nor is he always sure of finding this, but often, in lieu thereof, leather-covered sofas, or rather settees, present themselves, and, in the absence of these, an arrangement of chairs must suffice; and where they are wanting, then there is always the floor, which, covered with fresh hay, is the cleanest and safest, after all. With an ample supply of these cushions—and the

application of a little common sense in their arrangement, the traveller may traverse the Russian world all over without a bruise or a bump; for as springless vehicles are those least liable to accident in the rutty by-roads of the interior, they are most used; and, surrounded by these downy comforts, the traveller feels only the undulations of the tarentasse or cabike, as it surmounts the hill and valley difficulties of the common tract; and thus, these cushions, like the village ale-wife's chest of drawers, are so

“Contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, an easy-chair by day.”

These valuable adjuncts to the traveller in the interior of Russia, are procurable at every Gastinoë-dvoir, or bazaar, of every town. The Russian custom is to have several sets of chintz covers for these cushions, which can be changed at pleasure *en route*.

But for visitors from Western Europe, who may not feel disposed to patronise these impromptu beds à la Russe, in the capitals of Russia at least, they may find accommodation more suited to their habits in the hotels and boarding-houses kept by their respective compatriots. English visitors to St. Petersburg are especially fortunate in this respect, there being a most comfortable and reasonable house of this kind situated

near the British Embassy, and Church of the Factory, on the English quay, which is conducted by two well-educated ladies of the name of Benson, of whose careful attention and liberality everybody speaks most highly.

My *séjour* for the present being with a thoroughly Russian party, we plunge at once into Russian life, the first remarkable feature of which, hitherto encountered, is the lack of beds; cushions not being procurable in a moment, our party were unanimous in preferring to make shift without, rather than use such as were obtainable at the hotel, Russian ladies being fastidious on this point.

The hotel in question, which is a first-class German-Russian one, is a large three-sided pile of building, with its front entrance in one street, and its back entrance, through a large court-yard, in another. Each suite of apartments has its own stair, like the houses in France, Germany, and Scotland, being subdivided into "flats" and "half-flats," each subdivision being what the Scotch call a "self-contained house." The rooms we occupied were tolerably clean, spacious, meagrely furnished, luxuriously heated, and minus carpets; the floor being polished or dry-rubbed, and all the rooms communicating one with the other.

This cursory explanation may serve to render

it more intelligible to the imagination of the stranger how, even upon our board-like mattresses, with our heads pillowed upon carpet-bags stuffed to contortion, and with the thinnest of cashmere shawls spread over us, we managed to prolong our slumbers long after the god of the Russian day had made his appearance. How much longer we might have indulged, I know not, but for a loud single rap at our chamber-door, which roused my friend and me simultaneously.

“Kto tam?” or, who knocks? exclaimed Eudoxie, turning from one side to another to renew her doze, while a man’s voice outside repeated a hasty story, of which the word “petch” or stove was the only one intelligible to me. The fast-flowing, sonorous-sounding tale ended, a full stop ensued, and then followed what seemed to be another edition, delivered in a lower key, which, at length catching the drowsy ear of my friend, evoked a long-drawn “you may,” equivalent to “come in.” The door opened, and in walked a most picturesque-looking individual, who tip-toed his way across the room towards the before-mentioned “petch,” his arms clasping a billet of white birch logs, which he deposited in the capacious stove—a towering erection of bricks and mortar, coated with Dutch tiles—and then made his exit across the polished floor as if slippered in velvet, notwithstanding

that he wore the thick-soled jack-boots of his fraternity.

He soon re-entered with another arm-load, which afforded me an opportunity for a better look at him. French custom had in some degree inured me to the sight of "garçons de chambres" bustling about our sleeping apartments, but the idea of a Russian in the same position was rather more formidable; therefore, with a feeling akin to that which causes a child left in the dark to cover its head from the bogies of the surrounding darkness, I enveloped mine in my cashmere, prudently making observations from under its shelter. I might have spared myself any uneasiness however, for even to glance in our direction appeared to be the very last idea in his classical-looking head. Here was a fine specimen of a Russian moujik, or one of the peasant class, a servant at the hotel; his peculiar business being to attend to the stoves, lights, &c. He was apparently about twenty years of age, a well-fed, happy-looking fellow, his face enframed with long glossy auburn hair, slightly "wavy," and parted down the middle like a woman's; an almost feminine transparency of complexion being set off by a juvenile moustache and beard of the same golden hue. A pink-striped collarless shirt covered his athletic form, which shirt, closing on the side of the breast, fastened at the throat by a single

button. This garment he wore as a tunic over his trousers, which were of black velvet, made full, like those of a French soldier, and stuffed into his boots, which reached half up the leg. A sleeveless vest, also of black velvet, confined this shirt round the body, the sleeves of which, being long, straight, and loose, depended to the wrists, unconfined by gather or band. Having arranged his logs of wood on their ends in the capacious stove, he peeled from several of the chumps their beautifully-variegated bark; thrusting it into a small aperture in the middle of the pile, he rubbed a match on the heel of his boot, and, applying it to the train, it flared up as if saturated with turpentine. In a moment the wood was in a blaze, cracking and roaring up the wide-mouthed chimney with furious noise. Having opened a valve—situated in the side of the flue—and closed the door, he made his second exit as noiselessly as the first, and thus ended a very interesting initiatory lesson in stove-lighting à la Russe.

Navigating my way, through the silent mysteries of the several sleeping, anti, and public rooms which intervened, into the dining or “eating” room, I found a table overspread with a tablecloth, as for tea on the previous evening, presenting also the same array of tea-cups and saucers, with one solitary tumbler for our solitary lord—Mr. C——. The same bright brass Samoëvar,

or Russian tea-urn, that had elicited our admiration and regard on that occasion, presided now; but, instead of occupying, as then, a place on the table at the right-hand side of the tea-maker, it had taken its flight a short way off, and, enthroned on a small square table, apparently made for its august self, it fizzed, and fumed, and boiled away merrily, as if singing initiatory couplets to a juvenile of the same brazen stamp, which, with shriller note seemed to be trying its utmost to imitate the more burly effusions of its full-grown rival, whose place it had usurped; and most consequentially presided over a circle of pert-looking diminutive coffee-cups, emitting from its globose sides—bright as telescopic specula—the most odoriferous fumes of genuine Mocha. A joyous fire blazed in the Dutch stove; while the cracking logs and boiling Samoëvars* filled the otherwise comfortless-looking apartment with life and gladness. Half-walking, half-sliding along the clean slippery floor towards the double-glazed windows, I was almost surprised to find that the house-tops and streets were still covered with snow, and looked out, as upon a mechanical

* The tea-urns, instead of having a "heater," have the tube for this "heater" half filled with prepared charcoal, which is lighted from a valve at the bottom, and round which are pierced several holes for air. It is regulated from the top, and thus the water is kept boiling for any length of time it may be desired.

picture, at the long-bearded moujics in their sheep-skin surtouts—the woolly side in—and white-teethed moujicas, in gay-coloured quilted jackets and kerchief-covered heads, moving hither and thither; so summer-like was the genial warmth indoors, and so fresh and luxuriant the beautiful vine-like exotic which clustered in leafy festoons round the window, forming the most elegant drapery.

The sounds of many voices mumbling in whispers in the anti-room entrance near by, with occasional half-suppressed outbursts of merriment, interspersed with the Russianized names of the family, including that of the C——'s and my own, had been audible on first entering the dining-room. The numbers seemed to increase from without. Yielding to an impulse of curiosity, I opened the door of communication, when, to my surprise, there stood a crowd of footmen, some in livery of different kinds, as well as others in plain clothes. They were mostly young. Two wore the same livery—viz. cream-coloured coats and scarlet velvet accompaniments. Most of them were in full dress, as if arrayed for an occasion of ceremony, their various fur-lined great-coats and cockade-mounted hats lying about on chair and table. Several of these were fine men, tall and fair, with something of the Saxon features, and, in short, only wanted pow-

der, a little more impudence, and lack of moustache, to have vied with any of the white-calved portico-loungers of Grosvenor Square or Belgravia. Alexie was their centre of attraction, round whom they formed an attentive group; listening to a recital, doubtless, of his travels abroad, interrupting him occasionally by an enquiry or quaint remark, as attested by another subdued outburst of laughter.

Apart in a corner stood several women, seemingly awed into silence by this assembly of lackey lords. These were serfs belonging to the family, who, prior to their departure for Western Europe, had been their own household servants. They then received passports to seek service elsewhere. All had been fortunate in procuring situations, most of them in good families, and many had retained the same places for three years. Having heard of the return of their mistresses by the last boat, they had all hastened to welcome them back, and to ascertain if their services were required. With two exceptions, all these young men had been taught by their seigneur's wife to read, write, and keep accounts. Each of them possessed a Bible, the Life of Christ, and several religious tracts.

During the infancy and childhood of her daughters, this excellent lady had devoted a portion of every day to the instruction of the

children of the peasants who lived within an easy distance of her country residence ; but the difficulties she had to surmount, in getting them to attend, would have daunted a less hopeful spirit than her own. However, she has lived to receive their thanks now, when they are best able to appreciate the great benefit thus conferred upon them.

Irene, her mother's fac-simile in most things, has not fallen short of her model in this. One of her daily pleasures, at Brussels, Havre, or other places *en route* where opportunity offered, was to repair, after dinner, to the chamber of the cook and read the Bible with him, and, as far as she was able, expound such passages as were difficult to his comprehension. And he was well deserving these kind efforts. A few years before the time in question, this man was a peasant at the plough. Not liking his agricultural pursuits, he requested an employment about the "Court," as the residence of the seigneur is called. He was asked what he wished to be ; but having no particular fancy, and as the cook at "Court," by reason of his long servitude, was then a candidate for freedom, Alexie was sent to an hotel at Moscow* to learn his new business. After a few months, he returned *au fait* at all kinds of Rus-

* The family estate being within 350 miles of that city.

sian, German, and French dishes, a "first-rate" contriver of every kind of vagary in pastry, fast condiments in endless variety, jellies, creams, &c., in short, a bill of accomplishments almost incredible for so short an apprenticeship.

On his return from Moscow, he was duly installed *chef de cuisine*. He soon after married the maid of his mistress, that lady presenting the bride, by way of dower, with two nicely-furnished rooms, situated in a wing of the "Court." In process of time the fair-haired Marie presented her husband with a son and heir, which made Alexie the very happiest cook in all the Russias. The child grew apace, and was described by my friends as having been the most lovely, cherub-like little creature they ever saw; but just as he was beginning to take notice, his poor ignorant mother actually "killed him with kindness," by giving him all manner of unripe fruit, salt cabbage, and sour iced cucumbers, &c. Alexie never recovered the blow caused by the death of this child, although a second, equally beautiful, soon after took the place of the lost little one; but the prophetic shake of the father's head, when the surprising beauty of the boy evoked the admiration of all beholders, was insufficient to warn the imprudent mother, and he also passed away to that "better land." Alexie was inconsolable. His first ebullition of feeling was one of ungovern-

able rage, reflecting on his wife for all his sorrows. In vain she persisted that she had not given the child anything pernicious; but the testimony of a fellow-servant went to prove that he saw her putting palm-blossoms,* one after the other, into the infant's mouth, and, being but a few months old, it was supposed that swallowing these may have been the cause of its death. A silent melancholy now took possession of the once happy cook, and that wife, so recently the object of his deepest devotion, became hateful in his sight.

About this time his mistress was ordered abroad for her health, and Alexie petitioned to accompany her; being a clever manager and a trustworthy fellow, his master granted his request. A month after quitting his country home in the far interior, he found himself, with his mistress, at a fashionable hotel at Paris, an isolated man among his fellow-men, as he himself expressed it, "neither speaking nor eating† as they did." But the varied powers of a Russian must be tested, to be fully understood.

* It is a common practice among the Russian peasants to give their children, on Palm Sunday, three palm-blossoms to eat; where they are too young to perform this operation, the mother thrusts them down the throats of her little ones.

† He particularly alluded to the want of black bread, which was the greatest privation he experienced while abroad. Russians generally feel this when they leave home. In short, they like their black bread, as the Scotch prefer their oatmeal cakes to wheaten bread, and fancy it is starvation without it.

A smart English youth, speaking French à merveille, the page of an English lady residing at the same hotel, formed a warm friendship for the intelligent and lone Russian, and, after a few weeks—thanks to the teaching of “English Robert”—our hero could make himself generally understood in French. He shopped, and transacted the general business for his party. The maid of his mistress could trust him to match silks or ribbons, or purchase anything she required for her work, better than she would for herself.

He now acquired a Parisian air à la mode, was styled “Monsieur” by his subordinates, wore turn-down collars and turn-up cuffs, sported a massive gilt chain, and broad silver ring on his forefinger, cut his hair and trimmed his moustache in the prevailing fashion, and turned out, on high days and holidays, a very “exquisite” among serving-men.

From Paris his mistress went to Brussels, and here the indefatigable Alexie picked up the Belgian patois, so necessary to him in marketing, and so fluently had he acquired this clumsy jumble of sounds, that to hear him bargaining with country people for fruit and flowers, he might have been mistaken for a native.

He was major-domo, caterer, butler, footman, and cook, and the referee on all questions of expenditure. Every Monday his mistress settled

accounts with him, and from that day until that day week, all the year round, she never knew of what her dinner was to consist until informed by a neatly-written bill of fare, which was every day deposited on the napkin in her plate by the white-gloved Alexie; who, smart and spruce, in bright-buttoned blue coat, watch-chain and gold studs, stood ready to hand round the smoking viands which, a few minutes before, he himself had "dished up," in his *cuisine*.

After three o'clock every day, Alexie was a gentleman, and retired to his quiet room at the top of the house to study his Bible. And thither also, as regularly, repaired Irene, who left him just sufficient time before her visit to read over—which he always did aloud—the portion selected for the day. Many a time I have seen this lovely young girl, her exquisite Grecian face illuminated with the divine expression of a St. Cecilia, with her little Bible in her hand, and supposing herself unperceived, steal quietly upstairs, and there, alone, in that little room, with God and her father's serf, enjoy an hour of unalloyed pleasure, more profitable to them both than the possession of earth's choicest treasures.

But a severe trial was at hand, which caused them both deep sorrow. For a whole week there was no reading! Irene looked less placid than usual; Alexie too was changed. He, so careful,

so vigilant, became careless and absent, although exceedingly particular about his personal appearance; leaving the house the moment his duties permitted, and not returning until late at night, when he appeared happily excited, and very loquacious, interlarding his Russ with English expressions that savoured of a strong Hibernian accent.

Yet another "change came o'er the spirit of his dream," and about the time Alexie's fever was at its height, a letter arrived from his wife, distant, in the interior of Russia, 1200 versts from the Northern Capital. The epistle was full of love and hope. The poor woman,—who was much attached to her husband,—prayed for his speedy return; and in the meantime begged that he would allow her to sell the spotted calf to buy a winter cloak. A week after this, and the voice of Alexie might again be heard reading his Bible, and again his young mistress took her little book from its accustomed place at the head of the bed, and disappeared upstairs, looking serene as was her wont.

There was evidently a secret between those two, by far too delicate for the intrusion of a third party; and, well knowing the sensitiveness of our beautiful St. Cecilia, all forbore even a hint at the late troubled state of affairs. The Bible-readings were continued without interruption until their departure for Russia, and even as she lay bed-

ridden and giddy in her berth, on board the Vladimir, the little Bible, with its portion marked out, was transmitted daily to Alexie, also bedridden and ill in the fore-cabin.

Not until many months after, when the husband had rejoined his wife, and they again appeared happy in those two rooms at "Court,"—where both had drunk so deeply of life's joys and sorrows,—did Irene enter into the particulars of that troubled era at Havre. It appeared that Alexie had fallen into a snare set by a wily Irishman, who, perceiving the varied abilities of the Russian serf, had hoped to turn them to some account on the other side of the Channel. He lured poor Alexie with baits powerful enough to have overcome a stronger and more experienced mind. Freedom! Love! Gold! Alexie was perfectly well aware that by setting foot on British soil, his master could no longer claim his services. He had also been told that any of our first-class hotels would pay him well as a waiter.* At one moment the poor fellow had nearly yielded, but from neither of the foregoing considerations.

The Irishman had an only daughter, who, by Alexie's account, was an angel of beauty, possessing most irresistible attractions, in the sight of a Russian peasant, in a profusion of black hair and

* Indeed, in this respect he was invaluable. As a cook, he might have made his £200 per annum in any country.

deep blue eyes. For this girl Alexie had formed the most romantic, and—for the week it lasted—violent attachment, which had nearly extorted from him a promise to accompany his Irish friends to England. Such was the state of matters when the letter arrived from his wife, which happily turned the current of his affections into their proper channel. There had, however, been a violent struggle in the heart of the poor serf between his duty to the “old love” and this wild passion for the new. But that gentle Mentor—his almost adored Irene—seeing the favourable effect produced by the affectionate letter from his long-absent and almost forgotten wife, followed up the advantage, and we have seen the result.

CHAPTER III.

Nefsky—Rapid Driving—An Aristocratic Beauty—Esthonian Market Train—Stout Coachman—First Sight of the Tzar—Pedestrians—Old Wooden Houses—The Tzar Saluted—A Salute from the Tzar—Peter's Palace of three Rooms—Laundresses of St. Petersburg—A Colony of Palaces—The Tzar again.

ABOUT two o'clock, the "soogh"—as the Scotch would say—of some large body entering the snow-covered court-yard arrested the ear, and, on approaching the window to look out, a large empty sledge, drawn by four fine "iron-greys," with the usual accompaniments of coachman, postilion, and footman, presented itself.

This was the property of one of our late companions de voyage, who, too ill and fatigued to accompany us, as pre-arranged, nevertheless

resolved that her equipage should be the first in which the strangers were introduced to St. Petersburg.

This real kind-hearted politeness was fully appreciated and duly responded to, for in five minutes we were seated, and in one more had made our *début* in the principal street, the noble Nefski Prospekt, where, taking a place amid a crowd of vehicles of every description—running four deep, and all as fast as horse's legs could carry them—we were soon coursing on with the stream.

To be borne along at the utmost speed of four spirited "thorough-breds," ourselves inaccessible to the cold—the face of course excepted—covered by the ample bear-skin sledge-cover, the feet buried in a muff-like arrangement, the brilliant blue of heaven above, and the cold clear sunshine and bracing air around, was a new and exciting feeling to us of the more temperate South. And frozen ascetics indeed must they have been, who could have experienced without enjoyment, this exhilarating promenade *en équipage* competition, where half Petersburg—including even the Imperial Tzar himself—were competitors in the race. On we flew, now passing everything, and now—though seldom—surpassed. Again dashing ahead, we are first in the rank, our little postilion flourishing his small dog-whip, and shouting, in

his clear childish voice, "Take care there ! Take care!" *

Now a coal-black steed shoots past like a meteor, bearing onward the light, elegant silver-mounted sledge of some military Adonis in glittering casque and snow-white plume; the noble-looking driver, long bearded, caftaned, and with Tartar cap, is in half-standing attitude, his outstretched arms apart, the "ribbons"† passing through each white-gloved hand, as he urges on his willing favourite, man, horse, and vehicle, a separate and picturesque study in themselves.

Then follows an elegant "Brougham," of English make, the low oval window of which affords a fleeting, tempting glance of the region of amber velvet within, its soft golden hue well becoming the complexion of its solitary occupant, a beauty of Georgian loveliness. The entwining cipher, surmounted by a coronet almost imperial in its outline, in silver-relievo on the panel, attests her high rank; while many eyes, more accustomed to the sight of beauty and brilliancy than to horses harnessed *à l' Anglaise*, gaze at the highly-

* The penalty for driving over an individual is confiscation of the entire turn-out, but accidents of this kind are very rare.

† The reins used by young noblemen for their sledge horses are literally "ribbons," being usually about two inches wide, and finely embroidered in silk or wool. These are generally the birthday gift of some fair relative or friend.

finished suit of English trappings in which her jet-black "Persians" prance daintily along, and of which their blinkers form not the least curious superfluity to Russian taste and necessity. An English groom, in top-boots and tight-fitting fur-lined overcoat, occupies his tier of cushions on the box; and a well-matched compatriot, less elevated, by his side, leans back, and, with folded arms, looks all the importance of the fraternity.

Tumbling along in the rear of this *distingué* "turn-out," comes the crazy old hack of a yesvosgic—hired driver—each revolution of its rusty wheels evoking corresponding cracks and shrieks from every joint and panel, and threatening at every step to fall, a shapeless mass of *débris*, on the devoted backs of a brace of gaunt angular animals, which, with shuffling gait, manage somehow to get over the ground; their round, rosy-faced, independent-looking young driver humming low some favourite song of his country home; every now and then shouting his "berigissa," or take care, with the fleetest that pass him in the race.

And now another military nabob shoots past—and another—and another. And, following these, a cart, laden with the carcasses of mighty oxen, *en route* from the city slaughter-houses in the suburbs to the market on one of the islands.

Then comes a train of twenty or more small cradle-like carts, of the simplest construction, placed upon sledges, and drawn by the roughest and most sagacious of native horses, the long, sun-burnt tails and ragged manes of which hang about their small plump bodies in wild disorder ; while long tresses depend over the forehead and down the face, acting as natural blinkers, which they are indebted to some friendly puff of wind, or other accident, to push aside, ere they can see the busy world around them, which is as often explored with one eye as by both ; but on they go, always in a line ; patiently conveying, from their Esthonian homes, easy burdens of market produce to the Imperial City, the drivers of each lying snugly sheltered under the lea of the shallow bulwarks of his primitive conveyance, and apparently invulnerable to weather in every part except the nose. These Esthonian cavalcades form one of the most prominent and primitive features of the city and its suburbs, as well as one of considerable commissariat importance.

“Take care there ! take care !” again sounds in advance, and, approaching at full speed, comes the postilion, *avant courier*, rather than *attaché*, of a ponderous patrician family-coach, with the long traces of his “leaders” intervening at least five feet between them and the “wheelers,” which are driven by a veritable Colossus of a black-bearded

Tartar*—a perfect Jupiter, enthroned upon a splendid hammer-cover of black bear's-skin, and having the family arms emblazoned on its sides in a relieve of gold. A couple of tall footmen, in cocked hats and long scarlet overcoats, occupy the foot-board. These scarlet coats,—which are lined with fox-skin, and surmounted by elbow-deep capes, bound round with yellow lace, upon which are embroidered black eagles,—signify that the ladies within are connected with the Court, some *dame* or *demoiselle d'honneur* probably.

To these succeed other military meteors; a cart laden with hay, and two or three with bales of cotton, and several with logs of ebony; a calèche and pair, with a couple of comfortable-looking generals; a sledge, full of baskets of wet linen; errand-boys conveying their burdens on small sledges; the plain, unliveried Clarence of the British merchant; then a dashing sledge-and-four, with its gay occupants attired in hues varied and bright as the blossoms of summer.

Now comes a happy yesvosgic, wearing a time-

* An overgrown coachman is as much prized in St. Petersburg, and values himself as highly, as a tall footman, or pigmy "tiger," is in London. Several distinguished families in this northern capital have coachmen of such Daniel Lambert-like dimensions, that they are quite incapable of every-day duty, coming out only on State occasions, when they are with some difficulty hoisted to the box, and with a repetition of the same difficulty got safely down again.

honoured caftan and weather-beaten velvet cap, of the same Tartar cut as those of his more fashionable *confrères* who flash past him every moment. He is sauntering back to his stand, after a sharp drive with a fare starting by rail. One leg dangles over the narrow perch of a seat; his yellow worsted gloves are thrust into his silken girdle. He counts his money as he goes; his empty leathern purse he holds tight between his white teeth, while in his white palm* glistens an accumulation of silver pieces of all sizes; his sledge meanwhile bumping up and down over the snow-ruts, while the reins float loosely on the back of his long-haired native pony, which quietly and steadily explores his way through his long, pendent, sun-burnt mane-locks; when, lo! the sagacious brute stops short and looks at something near his feet, a shrill *beregissa* resounds through the air, and our little guardian ahead suddenly dashes aside, showing us at once the utility and safety of those marvellously long traces that we had ridiculed so much. Our Tartar has reined in his powerful wheelers; and on making

* It is quite curious to remark the contrast between the hands of some of these drivers and others of their grade, whose occupation enables them to have them constantly covered, and the cadets of the different corps, who, rather than wear the fingerless buck-skin gloves belonging to their embryo uniform, go without, and the consequence is, red and purple hands, swollen out of shape with chilblains.

inquiry into these manœuvres, so unusual, we find that a man, either intoxicated or in a fit, lies across our path. A policeman takes him in charge, and we hie on as before.

A repetition of the same objects succeeds. But a military officer has just dashed past, the grace and beauty of whose faultless bay had elicited considerable admiration from some of us, when his own outline and grand majestic bearing arrested the fleeting glance. He wore the ordinary grey mantle and casque mounted with gold, resembling many others we had seen during our drive; but there was a grandeur of dimension, an inexpressible, indefinable something about this officer in particular, that caused Mrs. C—— to exclaim simultaneously with myself, “Surely it is the Emperor!”

Many a look was directed in advance, hoping His Majesty—for it was he—might return, but our bearded sage of a coachman gave it as his opinion that the Tzar was bound for the Letainoë, or artillery quarter, which lay in the line of our route. Following close in the “wake” of the Imperial sledge, we pursued our way, and so entirely had we been engrossed with the ever-fleeting objects within the arena of our drive, that we appeared to have forgotten that the beautiful Nefski was flanked by handsome houses, and its pavements peopled with—to us—a new world.

Like the *habitués* of Brighton, enjoying their "jog-trot" "up the middle and down again," veritable "*promenade en équipage*" from Kemp Town to Brunswick Square, we had no eyes but for the interior of our neighbours' carriages; once beyond, however, there was no recalling them.

The most remarkable features of the Nefski Prospekt are its breadth and its lengthy continuation by means of bridges thrown across the canals that intersect it; the number of churches, palaces, and mansions of the nobility which mingle with the houses devoted to business; and though by no means the least characteristic and interesting—from the antiquity of the custom—the gaily-painted signs.

Like most streets, the Nefski has its favoured side, this preference arising from the ordinary cause—viz., its being especially favoured by the presence of the sun; although, in these high northern latitudes, this is a more important consideration than strangers to a climate of extremes might at a first glance suppose. The Russian sun is often abused as "arctic," "frigid," "unge-nial;" but, notwithstanding, he shines cheerily nearly every day throughout the long winter, his rays frequently falling so benignly, even in January, that the fur-shuba is exchanged for a mantle of eider-down, or light English cloak, for the walk or drive, which may lie within the cir-

cuit of his beams; while those in the shade are fain to draw around them the ample folds of their heavier fur-wraps. In short, it is gaiety, glitter, and smiles in the sunshine—grim old winter, wrinkled, hoary, and comfortless, out of it. A certain portion of Nefski's sunny side forms the fashionable promenade and shopping réunion of the exquisites of the capital. Here *élégants* of both sexes mingle in walking cotillon-like fashion; no methodical outside and inside punctilio, streaming in orderly enfilades, right and left, on the broad arena of that well-swept pavement, imposes its single-file discipline on the picturesque confusion of that commingling rare of "ladye fayre and bold cavaliere." Groups of military and naval officers, all draperied in large grey mantles, their casques, and other official head-gear, as diversified as those of their own *regiment modèle*,* stand discussing the merits of the last night's ball or masquerade, or the latest "*on dits*," Prince Menchikoff's youngest witticism, or hardest rap, mayhap, at the Tzar's hard-working favourite, the architect-minister, Kleinmichel. Others saunter in two, or three, or half-a-dozen abreast, looking out for acquaintances or notabilities among the many fair ones who gracefully

*A regiment which figures at reviews, each man of which wears a different uniform, thus combining in one regiment the uniforms of every regiment of every nation in Europe.

descend from their carriages to take a turn on this Northern "Broadway," or to shop at the various magazines. The more diminutive outlines of their symmetrical figures, arrayed in tight-fitting and light-coloured *robes de velour*, or other rich material in vogue, blend strangely, yet picturesquely, with the draperied, statue-like grouping of the handsome officers of the guard; the buoyant-stepping, eye-flashing Circassian; the ample-chested Cossack; black-coated civilian and smart cadet—all exquisites of high degree, who ogle or elbow them *en route*.

Here also chime in the bourgeoisie, tripping waiting-maids, and *modistes'* apprentices to see the fashions, workmen and peasants, in sheep-skin coats and capacious boots, and common soldiers. Striding on through the mazy promenade, comes the dignified, thoughtful, dreamy, holy-looking priest of the Greco-Russian Church, his grey beard descending to his girdle, and his venerable grey locks scattered over his shoulders, mingling, like silver threads, with the graceful folds of his purple silk robe; a large iron cross covers his breast, and a tiara-like cap of green velvet, bound with sable, protects his head. And, sweeping past in all the pride of her holiday attire, appears the wife of the wealthy tradesman. Her "shuba" is of brightest amber, green, pink, or blue satin, lined with costly fur, and surmounted by a large

collar of the same ; her comparatively small head-piece—the disproportionate capital to this fluted satin column—is enveloped in a brown silk kerchief, not one end or ruffled fold of which is permitted to break the uniform surface of its egg-shaped contour. Not a stray lock, or even single hair, is to be seen, but the very tip of the ear, with its large gold ring or drop, peeps coquettishly out. On she sweeps, like a queen in her glory, the envy of all subordinate beholders.

And, scarcely a foot removed from all the ever-passing bustle of the great thoroughfare, on the leaside of a flight of steps, snugly seated on their heels, and with an oyster-barrel on end between them, are a pair of juvenile gamblers—shopboys—about ten or twelve years of age, habited, like their elders, in the warm sheep-skin surtout, cloth caps, roomy boots, and leathern gauntlets, and with their linen aprons rolled round their waists, out of the way or to preserve them clean. So deeply are they engaged with their game of doorack, or “fool”—the Scotch “black face,” a childish game at cards—as to be quite indifferent to the whisk from flaunting corners of military mantles, or softer brush of the velvet or satin skirts, as they flutter past them.

The ever busy eye, luxuriating in novelty, roams unwearied, now to one side of the street, now to the other. And truly all who run may read,

for, painted upon boards, but more frequently on the plaster round the windows and doors, and upon the swing shutters of the shops, are gigantic representations of the various objects to be found for sale within, depicted in every variety of form and exaggeration of colouring. To Mrs. C——, these afforded a never-ending source of amusement; but to her compatriot of the sister "land o' cakes," they were less remarkable, from early association, for the baker's sign-boards in some parts of the north of Scotland are almost fac-similes of some of these, but that the form of the "breads," as the French would say, was different. Instead of the "sweety wigs," and "cookies," and "baps," and "sweety loaves," and "short-bread" of Scottish ingenuity, here were "sucharie," and "rosen brot," and "ap-pluchie,"—"rusks," "rose-shaped loaves," and "slap in the face," and a host of other devices, too numerous to detail.

The French glove-maker is represented by a colossal wooden glove dangling over his shop door, while twin giants, in red and green, stretch their lanky digits the whole length of his shop-front. In like manner, caps, bonnets, flowers, feathers, lappets, and all kinds of women's head gear, may be seen flying all over the house front, without even a shadow to stand upon; while a little farther on, boots, shoes, and fur-bound

slippers, of every size and colour, are dotted with unsparing brush—and truly a painter's license—all over the shutters and door. While the modiste on the *bel étage* is advertised by a swing-board, on each side of which is painted a lady in full costume. One looks up the street, the other down, bravely confronting all weathers in low dresses and short sleeves. The sign of the ladies' habit-maker is, however, about the most distingué and truly drawn, and represents a very good-looking young lady in full and fashionable *costume d'amazone*. But the pastry-cook, bon bon-manufacturer, Italian warehouseman, and fruiterer bear away the palm, for their painted show of "good things" renders the realities ill-favoured in comparison. Here are painted grapes, which, for richness of colour, bursting maturity, and immense size, are assuredly the descendants of those found growing by the brook of Eshcol. The beautiful little oblong "Crimsky Labookie," or apples from Crim, with their delicate tinting of emerald green streaked with pink, are represented by bouncing vulgarities, the size of an infant's head. As to oranges, peaches, pears, and every other representative of the fruit tribe, they are all equally flattered, and impress a first beholder with the most longing desire to commit a razzia in a Russian fruit-garden. But, with all these exag-

generations of size and colour—which it is obvious are both necessary, the former to attract attention from a distance, the latter to allow for the ravages of climate—these pictorial signs clothe the streets with life, and present to the foreigner and unlettered peasant an ever legible dictionary. This pretty and primitive custom is, however, on the decline, in St. Petersburg at least, for a Frenchman has introduced a good, durable, and easily-made imitation of marbles, woods, and porphyry of different kinds, one or other of which now embellishes the fronts of the principal shops in the capital.

The most interesting wares exposed for sale in the *magasins* of this gay perspective are the glittering accumulations of saints, missals, communion-plate, and other holy vessels used in the Church service, and all scintillating in costly gems, from the robes of the Virgin and child—a mass of emeralds and pearls—to the tiniest Slavonic missal bound in velvet, and richly studded with diamonds and rubies. While these treasures sparkle in the windows of a floor neither on the ground nor on the first, but an intermediate arrangement attained by a flight of five or six outside steps, a similar flight conducts from the pavement downwards to the shop probably of a greengrocer—though, as a general rule, these congregate in colonies nearer the markets at the

back of the Nefski—who is also a purveyor of game. Here the rich plumage of every variety of game bird—and they are very numerous—is thrown up in picturesque effect against bunches of white and yellow turnips, ruddy carrots, white parsnips, beet-root, immense white cabbages, and herbs and greens in profusion. The cellar shops in a cold climate are desirable, being sheltered and warm. The doors of most of them stand open the whole winter through.

Still proceeding along the Nefski, we approach the famous Gastinoë Dvor—literally the guest's square—or bazaar, beneath whose broad, overhanging roof hundreds of pigeons have built their nests, and fly about in flocks, describing circles in the air, or descending in foraging parties, pick about among the horses' hoofs, and not unfrequently alight on a passing sledge or on the driver's head.

Crossing the Anitchicoff bridge, which spans one of the canals that intersect the Nefski, we remarked the celebrated colossal designs in bronze which adorn it. These artistic creations are the work of Baron Klot, a native sculptor, and represent horses in full action, each restrained by a youth—a very Hercules in development of muscular power. Still following our Imperial leader—who, agreeably to our Tartar's prognostic, turned out of the Nefski up the Letainoë—we

found ourselves in another broad perspective, flanked on one side by the houses of the nobility, and on the other by the garden walls of houses in another street. Among these were the grounds of Count Sheremetieff—the Duke of Sutherland or Marquis of Westminster of these climes. In this Letainoë we first met with the old-fashioned wooden houses which “once upon a time” were the only style of building in use. Many of these are very picturesque, being detached and surrounded by gardens, and overhung by the graceful foliage of the lady-birch. Some of them are little palaces, replete with every elegance. The German residents are partial to these wooden snuggeries, as are also the Russians of the “old school,” who regard all modern improvements, such as stone or brick houses, papiros and railroads, as downright innovations on their individual rights and privileges, and vow never to patronize such “new-fangled vagaries.” Ay, even here, in Young Russia, are many resembling dear respected members of this same “old school” at home, who still cling to antiquated customs simply because they belonged to their time and age, most of whom would prefer being trotted a whole day over a bad road to being whisked the same distance in a couple of hours by rail. Passing these cozy retreats of “Old Russia” we come to a fine barrack-square and parade-ground, and,

near by, the elegant church of the Brèobrèjensky* guards.

Crossing the street of St. Serge, we are suddenly in the midst of barracks, soldiers, ordnance-houses, great guns, mortars, and cannon balls, piled in formidable heaps at certain distances, the great guns and mortars—chiefly Turkish trophies—arranged on a slightly elevated pavement running along the ordinary one. Here also was a guard-house, opposite the front of which, a wooden stage, partially railed in, presented several stands of arms, a drum, and a sentry-box, before which a solitary sentinel, wrapped in a fur-lined over-coat†, kept watch. On the nearer approach of the Tzar—their General—a bell rang violently, the drum was beaten furiously, and in a second the stage was filled with fighting men, who, seizing their bayonets from the rests, hurried to their places, the young officer in command having barely time to throw off his mantle,

* The Brèobrèjensky and Simionsky are two “crack” regiments, of which Russia may well be proud. At five years of age Peter the Great played at soldiers with the children of the nobility. When the embryo general became a man, he formed his playfellows into two distinct corps, calling them after two places at Moscow—the home of his youth. Thus these two regiments formed the nuclei whence have radiated the legions of Russia’s army at the present day.

† When on duty, whether day or night, in the winter, all sentinels wear fur-lined great-coats. On changing guard the new comer pops into the warm wrap of him whom he succeeds.

and, sword-in-hand, place himself at the head of his band, ere their General of Generals was upon them.

Here then his truly Imperial-looking Majesty drew up, and as we passed his sledge—for etiquette upon any other terms would have prevented our doing so—we were gratified with a full-face view of this magnificent monarch, who returned our loyal recognition of his presence by a military salute. His large, full grey eyes regarded each of us—as it seemed—most fixedly; the expression was the earnestness of enquiry, as if he had been revolving in his mind where, or if ever, he had seen any of the party before, his recollection on such matters being tenacious to an extraordinary degree.*

* As a proof of this, in 1848, that year of continental revolution, Russia stood firm, while all around her trembled with the shock. To testify their heartfelt appreciation of the great blessings of that tranquillity resulting from the wonderful consolidation wrought out for his country by the Emperor Nicholas, the heads of all the great bodies in the Empire waited on the Tzar to offer their homage and congratulation. Among these was the late Mr. de K——, Governor of Riazan, one of a deputation from the Governors of Provinces. The moment he entered the presence chamber the Emperor recognised him, saying, “Ah, K——, it is long since you and I last met; twenty years tell upon a man, though you keep your looks well.” Mr. K—— could not at the moment recall the exact period, but on his return home he ascertained that it was twenty years and two months, all but three days, since he had taken leave of the Tzar on his departure for some distant embassy, since which time he had not seen his sovereign.

Sweeping round the end of this Letainoë, we are dashing along the Imperial quay, with a line of palaces at one end, and the Neva, ever beautiful, even hampered as "she" is at the present moment with the ice-floes of Lake Ladoga, on the other. Far in the distance on the opposite shore, looking like a fisherman's hut, is the modest Palace of Peter, with its slender yet ample contingent of three simply-furnished apartments, which breathe the very sentiment of the poet—

"Man wants but little here below."

The original structure has been enclosed, like a kernel in a shell, by a light shed, half wood, half glass—a protective shield for its old age, planned and placed there by the Emperor Nicholas. Under this same covering is preserved the memorable little boat built by Peter, in which he made excursions even into the Baltic, and in which he encountered that momentous storm in the Gulf of Finland which had nearly cost Russia the life of her Cromwell. One of the three apartments in this little palace is now used as a chapel, where those who have friends or relatives setting out on a journey go to pray for their protection.

Far away, at the back of these islands, a transparent fringe of trees rises in light fantastic outline against the brilliant orange and *couleur de rose* of the sunset-tinted sky; while, mid-distant, rising in imposing grandeur out of the bosom of

the Neva, appears the fortress of St. Petersburg—that bastioned citadel which formed the first foundation of the Imperial city—the mausoleum of the Tzars, the depôt of the crown treasure, the state-prison, the “Tower,” in short, of these northern climes, whose spire of 360 feet high, like that of the Admiralty, not far distant, is gilt with ducat gold.

In noisy contrast to this silent, solemn consideration, a floating stage, railed round and moored to the granite bulwark of the river, attracts the amused attention of the stranger, for, on this stage, some dozen laundresses congregate round an oblong space cut out in the middle, where, with much ado, they talk and laugh, and rinse and wring whole cargoes of snow-white linen, which, depositing in deep baskets made of plaited bands of thin deals, they bear off to distant parts of the city. In summer, these bevies of loquacious damsels, attired in bright-coloured cottons of every hue, present the most lively and picturesque appearance ; the clear unruffled bosom of the stream reflecting back in many a flickering line the red, white, blue, or yellow of the national costumes, while echo, on the opposite shores, catches up the gay laugh and pert repartee. Throughout the winter the women still pursue their rinsing avocations. The floating stage is then removed, and an oblong hole cut in the ice.

At this season the women wear sheep-skins like the men, and the same stout boots, into which they stuff their skirts as the men do their trowsers, returning home, after their day's work, walking icebergs. These are chiefly the laundresses of private families, everyone with any means keeping their own. After this rinsing process, the linen is hung up to dry in the cherdack, or drying loft—that unfinished part of a house between the rafters and the attics—and which is as necessary an adjunct to a Russian domicile as its kitchen.

There are, however, public laundresses in the city, who advertise the specific getting up of “fine things,” and of stiff white petticoats, which may often be seen in bunches of half dozens, all gathered together by the strings, and held aloft over the shoulders of their bearer, who thus conveys them through the streets to their various destinations, their inflated proportions being extended without a crease, like so many bladders cut straight at one end.

On this same Imperial quay we draw near to a colony of palaces, which present to the river a façade of three quarters of a mile in length. The first of these, situated within a stone's throw of the “Summer Gardens,” and with its back windows overlooking “the Champ de Mars,” a space where 100,000 troops are sometimes reviewed, is the Oldenburg Palace, the residence of

the Prince of Oldenburg;* to this succeeds the Marble Palace, built of granite, with pilasters of marble, from which it takes its name. The Grand Duke Constantine has resided here since his marriage. Almost adjoining, are the Great and Little Hermitages, built by Catherine II., connected by galleries to the Imperial Winter Palace, which is said to be the most magnificent and imposing regal residence in Europe, covering a space of 400,000 cubic feet, and containing 500 apartments. This Tzarinian abode is a quadrangular pile of building, half Corinthian in style, its many chimneyed roof being hidden by an elegant open balustrade, ornamented with urns and statues; the principal entrance is on the Plaine d'Isaac; the family entrance on the west front, overlooking the Admiralty; and the private entrance of the Tzar at a little white porticoed doorway on the Neva side, the private apartments of the monarch being situated at this corner and immediately under the telegraph tower.

Here our Tartar had slackened his speed, that

* This estimable family is well-known at Torquay, where some of its members often pass a portion of the year, and where it is highly esteemed. Indeed, this kind feeling appears to be reciprocated, for I have heard Her Imperial Highness allude in most pleasing terms both to that charming place and to its inhabitants. The second brother of the Emperor Alexander II. is married to the eldest daughter of the Prince of Oldenburg.

we might gaze more leisurely at the elegant Canaletti-like style of building, its *terra cotta* coloured façade contrasting so well with the *tapis* of snow outspread around it, the effect of which we were clamorously discussing when the Imperial proprietor dashed past us at his usual flying speed, saluting us as he did so, and drawing up at the little doorway before mentioned, leapt out of his sledge and instantly disappeared ; but his Majesty's beautiful bay horse and the Imperial coachman came in for a full share of our admiration as one drove the other slowly past us towards the stable.

A few paces further on, and our out-door race for the day was run ; the ruddy glow of the gorgeous sunset suddenly sobered down into murky grey, and dim twilight already enveloped the glittering city as we drove into the court-yard of our hotel, though scarcely more than thirty-five minutes past three.

CHAPTER IV.

A Russian Home—St. Petersburg at Early Morn—The Matin Bells—The Cowherd's Horn—Brilliant effect of the Clear Atmosphere—A Contrast—The Boudoir Suite—A Sad Story—A Lady's Sleeping Apartment—A Gentleman's Cabinet.—Receiving Visitors—Superb Creeping Plant.

WE have occupied our new house nearly a week, and the novelty of settling down into this Russian home has so entirely engrossed all concerned, that, for the moment at least, the world beyond is forgotten.

The impetus imparted to the body by the whirling onward march of travel begins now to subside, while, on the contrary, that of the mind increases; so wide and diversified, so novel and interesting, is the promise of this new field for its research and consideration. Every sense is now embarked in the contemplation of the ever-changing panorama of domestic life, both out of

doors and in, which greets the stranger at every turn, and not the least curious detail of which,—to a Londoner at least,—is the appearance of this city of gilded domes at morning stove-lighting.

Long ere it is yet day, the stranger is roused from the deep enchantment of sleep by a strange and mysterious symphony, the last cadence of which, borne off to a distance, vibrates through the crystal air with unearthly sweetness. The sounds have ceased, and supposing himself under the impression of a pleasant dream, he thinks of it no longer. But again those harmonious chimes burst forth, floating nearer and nearer, till, carried away “on the wings of the wind,” they are once more lost in the distance. Making a note of this mysterious visitation for inquiry on the morrow, he again seeks repose, while the devout, whom those mystic sounding bells summon to matin prayer, hurry on through the still dark streets.

Again the stranger is aroused, but this time 'tis to the monotonous tune of the cowherd's horn. Finding that daylight, bright and fair, has already invaded his dormitory—a retreat in all probability screened or curtained off in the darkest and quietest part of the room—he betakes himself to the windows, and peering forth into the streets below, behold, a formidable drove of milch kine which their unmusical guardian conducts to the suburbs for exercise and air.

Now turning his gaze towards the house-tops, thousands of twirling white spirals, the smoke from the burning billets of lady-birch, spurt out from the forests of low chimneys that start in picturesque confusion from the slightly-sloping green house-tops. These evaporate in a moment, leaving no murky streak, or smallest speck, to sully the pure blue of that clear, cold, sunlit vault above. Beneath this bright, cold, dazzling sun, the clean white and yellow façades of the houses sparkle in their purity ; and, surmounting these, star-bespangled dome, and burnished cupola, and graceful spire stand out in bold relief against the rich blue enamel of the heavens. What a contrast is this bright, spacious, sparkling, scintillating "étoile polaire" to our dear, dirty, foggy, soot-begrimed old London ! enshrouded in a perpetual chiaroscuro, as peculiarly her own as the fog, gas, and coal smoke which produce it. 'Tis a delicately-touched "Leonardo" beside a mezzotint.

And now, out of doors and in, all is hurry and confusion, for, like ourselves, all this Russian world appears to be settling down for the winter, having just returned from their wanderings abroad or from the interior. The Neva is again free from ice, and bears on her broad bosom fleets of barges laden with hay and wood, the fag-end of the autumn consignments for winter consumption,

which "little winter's" impromptu arrival had so abruptly retarded. The snow has all disappeared, leaving the green house-tops pleasant places for the wandering eye and dancing sun-beams to rest upon. Now is the harvest time of the *Perrivosgickii* or Neva boatmen, who ply their gaily-painted gondola-like wherries with busy oar, for now everybody is in a hurry, and who would go a verst round by a bridge when he can take the perrivosgie for a few copeikii.

This Russian home consists of four public and two semi-public rooms, which, with the exception of the dining-room, are all *en suite*, communicating one with the other by means of folding-doors, which, when open, present a perspective of some length. The dining-room, several bed-rooms, maid and footman's sleeping-rooms, store-rooms, &c., are all at the back.

The principal apartment is the *salon de danse*, or music-hall, and, in every house, is the largest of the suite. To the back of this salon is the dining-room, with which it communicates by folding-doors. Leading out of this salon in another direction is the *gastinoë*, or room for guests, generally more elegantly furnished than the others. This apartment is seldom used except for company, when it is occupied by the elders for cards. And still another apartment leading out of this same salon is the family drawing-room, and

beyond that a boudoir or young ladies' morning-room ; and still beyond, all on the same line, two semi-bedrooms, such as are common in France or Germany, the bed and bed-chamber appurtenances being all hidden behind a screen, while the other portion is arranged as a sitting-room. This is peculiar to Petersburg, but is not a Russian custom, for the houses in the interior are provided with rooms as exclusively and privately bed-rooms as with us in England. From all these rooms small doors lead out into a passage, on the opposite side of which are the bed-rooms of the younger portion of the family. One end of this small passage terminates in the dining-room, the other in a long dark corridor which starts off at a right angle towards the rear of the house, and down one side of which are a range of servants' rooms, the extreme end of it terminated by ponderous double doors, beyond which is the kitchen, laundry, and other offices.

Already the finishing touches are being administered to the several apartments of the suite. Russian work-people of various kinds, fine, handsome, well-behaved fellows, tip-toe their way hither and thither over the highly-polished *parquet*, or, catching the eye in the perspective of some long passage or distant inner chamber, present a tableau vivant highly effective.

In the hall, four Roman-looking youths in pink

tunic shirts, black velvet trowsers — as usual, stuffed into their boots—their muscular throats bare, and their long clean glossy *chevelure*, according to custom, parted down the middle of the head* and confined by a band; if carpenters, with a shaving. A hard brush is strapped to the sole of the right foot of each, and, all in a row, with the backs of their hands resting on the backs, they undulate to-and fro with a precise monotonous step, somewhat resembling the preliminary movement of the Polka-Mazurka; and thus, with the right now in advance, and then thrown out behind, they dry-brush their way all over the apartment, leaving a clean polished surface behind them. In the adjoining apartment, other loosely-clad youngsters polish the furniture, shake out and switch the drapery, and replace chair and settee cushions. In the *gastinoë*, Alexie superintends the movements of two grave-looking long-caftaned and bearded men, who, mounted upon steps, are hanging up curtains and *portières*. And now, unfolding, with the care of a *connoisseur*, several handsome lace under-curtains, he hands them up to the upholsterer, and then, looping them up with care, retreats to a distance to study their

* The present fashion of wearing the hair and beard as imported from the Crimea, and adopted by Englishmen, is that of the Russian peasants and tradesmen only; the nobility never wear beards, and rarely whiskers.

effect, his arms a-kimbo and his head on one side.

“Harosha?”—or, is it well?—asks one of the grave men on the high steps.

“Da—a—s, Ha—ros—hes,” or, it is well, but so accented that it signified superlatively well—replied Alexie, now moving his head to the other side admiringly.

In the family drawing-room the ladies are superintending the arrangement of flowers which have just arrived. In the dining-room several caftaned furriers spread out and assort their wares, having, moreover, brought with them a pile of family furs, such as fox and sable-lined cloaks, top-coats for domestics, lined with squirrel and fox, bear-skin sledge-covers, muffs for the hands, and muffs for the feet, &c., which they had retained for preservation from moth during the absence of their owners abroad.

At length, then, all is arranged, every nook has its image high up near the ceiling, and every cranny and bracket its flowers; not a shred, not a thread or an atom of disorder is visible throughout that gay suite of sunny apartments; those odoriferous bowers, decked with heliotrope, jasmine, and the rose, where fair forms glide noiselessly about on almost wafer-thin soles, and lovely faces peer at one through the vine-covered trellis, or bower-like arrangement, which is common in

every sitting-room; and the voice of mirth and song breathe an almost sacred harmony over all. Only one thing still remains to be done, and in the eyes of the orthodox Greco-Russian Christian this one is of the gravest moment, but even this is about to be realized, for here comes the Papa or priest; he has already performed a religious ceremony in the *gastinoë*, where a small table, overspread with a "decent white cloth," has been set out as a reading-desk, supporting a large volume of the Holy Scriptures, out of which a portion has been read, followed by prayer. After this, taking a large silver vessel, filled with consecrated water, in one hand, and a brush in the other, the priest made the tour of the apartments, sprinkling with his brush as he strides along, and looking—except for the large cross that hangs upon his breast—exceedingly like a sorcerer, as, with long dark flowing robe, and long lank locks, he sweeps hurriedly on, repeating as he goes some appropriate prayer, supposed to exorcise all malignities, and purifying the house from all unrighteousness; from *dom-avoës*, hobgoblins, demons, evil-eyes, and all such hyperphysical influences.

But there is still another little apartment leading out of that popular salon before described, which had well nigh been forgotten. This is the vestibule, which here has a character peculiar

to itself; this vestibule, or entrance-hall, is generally carpeted, and is provided with a sofa and chairs, also a mirror on the wall, and a handsome piece of furniture fitted up with pegs and rails for hats, caps, fur pelisses, mantles, walking-sticks, umbrellas, &c. Here, at two o'clock every day, a servant takes up his position to answer the door; sometimes this porter is an old grey-headed serving-man, sometimes a smart youth, and not unfrequently a dwarf. Here no footman's rash thundering peal startles the whole house, reverberating through its most distant intricacies, but a gentle bell rings quietly just inside, so that it is scarcely touched ere the door is opened.

"Ekaterina Petrovena dom?" Is Catherine, the daughter of Peter, at home? inquires the visitor.

"Domus," at home, is the laconic reply.

If a lady, she is here relieved of her furs and fur-lined over-boots, slipping out of her winter trammels like a chrysalis out of its shell, and, after casting a satisfactory look at the glass, tripping away over the polished floors, on the thinnest possible of leather soles, and in the very prettiest of summer-like costumes, to the innermost retreat of the suite, to one of the demi-bedrooms before mentioned, where she is sure to find the mistress of the house. If a stranger, or of high rank, the

guest is always announced, and the lady of the house meets her half way.

If a gentleman, and very intimate, he leaves his goloshes and mantle in the vestibule, and brushing up his *chevelure*, and smoothing down his moustaches at the glass, walks up, with his hat or helmet in hand, towards the same inner retreat; the clank of a spur, or the skiff of a thin boot on the *parquet* near her door, being the first announcement of his presence to the lady of the house.

Certainly no arrangement can be better adapted for convenience and display than this, which, it is needless to say, is in the same style as continental houses generally, but with this exception in favour of the modern houses of St. Petersburg, that there is a go-ahead grandeur of range and dimensions, which appears to be more nearly allied to that of American cities, than is common in Western Europe. Add to this the most artistic decorations, luxurious furniture, colossal mirrors, with every appendage of velvet, satin, damask, and lace drapery, chandelier and *bras de mur*, statuary, objects of virtu, and all of the most costly description; while the high summer temperature which pervades these winter palaces admits of the ever-grateful, graceful embellishment of all kinds of shrubs, flowers, and creeping plants. These are to be found in every dwelling,

from the solitary rose-tree in the attic or cellar window of the sempstress to the most luxuriant exotic in the windows of her wealthier neighbours on the *bel étage*. Flowers and plants form an expensive item of household expenditure in these climes. At the commencement of the season, arrangements are made with a florist to supply a certain number of shrubs and flowering plants in pots, which are replaced by others every month, for a certain sum, varying from ten to a hundred silver rubles per month; these are disposed in broad sills, in niches, on pillarettes, in vases, and on numberless invisible contrivances, such as brackets starting out at the backs of sofas or chairs, or corner lounges; or hanging pendent from the ceiling, or from windows, or from the roofs of the bower screens, which, formed of trellis-work, adorn the principal apartments. A very beautiful and prolific evergreen creeper, commonly called the "Dutch vine," flourishes most luxuriantly indoors. It may not unaptly be termed the indoor ivy, but with this difference, that instead of creeping along slow and sure, tenaciously clinging with centipedal-like feelers, this splendid exotic grows fast, continually throwing out a profusion of glossy serrated leaves of rich light green, contrasting beautifully with the darker varied shades of those of former years, while its tenacious vine-like cirri grasp whatever

may be within reach, and in absence of any foreign object cling to its own branches, thus forming the most graceful festoons. Sometimes it may be seen making the circuit of a room, climbing round the doorways and windows, enframing pictures, peeping into the mirrors, embracing marble nymphs round waist and throat, and roving whithersoever it listeth.

A favourite and fashionable piece of furniture, the model of which is said to have emanated from the Imperial salons, and which appears to have been expressly designed for the display of this elegant plant, is a table the size of a small loo table, the support being three twisted pillars resembling the branches of a tree. At the base of this is a flower-pot made of zinc or tin, whence start several roots of the vine; these, being led up between the supports, pass through a round opening in the centre of the table-top, and twining round two large ebony serpents which issue from the same centre in coiling embrace, thus shooting upwards four or five feet high, their crested necks and drooping heads dominate the table in opposite directions, their scaled bodies being entirely covered by the luxuriant foliage of the plant; their heads and a portion of the neck only are visible, thus giving full effect to the design, which is meant to represent the monsters, with open mouth, forked tongue, and glistening eye, about to spring

simultaneously, one on either side, upon the fair ones who may be seated round this leafy bower, discussing work or bonbons.

Our English ivy is also an exotic here. It refuses to brave a Russian winter out of doors, therefore is pampered and petted and smothered with kindness in, and, like most *enfants gâtés*, repays all this solicitude with languor, pallor, and ingratitude, its lanky stalks reminding one of potatoe tubers growing through a hole in a cellar door, with its straggling leaves so few and far between as to be scarcely recognisable.

Our "appartement," then, may be taken as a type of the aggregate of Russian dwellings, from that of the minister of state, inclusive, to that of the wealthy serf, varying, of course, as to size and style, according to circumstances.

Peter I., that practical General, who, by condescending to the minutest details, accomplished so much in so short a time, entirely remodelled the homes of his subjects. During his travels in Western Europe, he was particularly struck by the ameliorating influence so extensively exercised on society by woman, and for the first time he viewed her, whom he, in common with his countrymen, had hitherto deemed a soulless, frivolous bagatelle, as occupying—to him—a new sphere. He beheld her the rational, well-educated helpmate of man, the guiding star of his home, and the life

and ornament of society abroad. Hitherto, in Russia as in ancient Greece, the lady of rank, except on special occasions, had been immured like a recluse, occupying the most secluded apartments in the house of her lord, where she was accessible only to the members of her own family; scarcely ever venturing abroad; totally uneducated, for in those days the grammatical* construction of her superb mother tongue had no written form, she whiled away time in song, or in hobgoblin tales, or, like our great-great-grandmothers, "birrin at her spinnin' wheel." As to social réunions, in the modern sense of the word, they were unknown.

Therefore, with the new-born Petersburg, dawned the light of the Russian lady's emancipation, and as the first wooden edition of the now Imperial city burst into life, the Tzar Peter was at hand to infuse into it an element hitherto unheard of. The embryo city then consisted of low wooden erections, one, and at most two stories high; some were long, some square, and others rambling, as if added to after the completion of the original design; most of them were detached, although formed in lines or perspective,

* Peter the Great is said to have first arranged the Russian alphabet. In the reign of Catherine II., Loumonosoff, the poet, arranged the language into something like order; and in the reign of Alexander I., Greachy set it to those grammatical rules which are now in use.

like streets, and picturesquely overhung by drooping "lady-birch and the romantic elfin Rowan tree," or mountain ash. These, the houses of the nobility, were by Imperial ukase obliged to contain a guests' chamber, a smoking-room, one in which to play cards, chess, or draughts, and a salon or dancing-room. As many more as the proprietors pleased, but these were essential; and further, it was required that these apartments should be lighted up and thrown open three times a-week for the reception of the general acquaintances of the family; and, above all, that the ladies, both married and single, were to accompany the hitherto solely privileged lords. Dancing and cards were to be commenced at four o'clock, and be discontinued at ten; and lastly, though by no means the least significant part of the order—viz., that chairs and refreshments were to be provided for the company, and that every guest, on arriving and departing, was to bow to those present. Tradesmen were privileged to attend these meetings.

It is difficult to imagine how the grave Muscovites, those tenacious retainers of old habits, accepted this inroad on a prejudice which it must be presumed was dear to them, striking as it did at the very core of their social system, or how the emancipated ladies conducted themselves under their new form of existence; but judging

from the graces, fascinations, accomplishments, and learning of their descendants of the present time, their countrymen at least may bless the day on which this element of progress dawned in the head of their great regenerator.

CHAPTER V.

A Modern Residence—English Firesides in Russian Homes—
 Exploration of the Attic Story—The French Refugee—
 The Poor Custom House Clerk—The old Dame and her
 Pets—The Stables—The Tzar Theodore and the Equipages
 of the Nobility—Russian Wealth of Private Carriages—
 Dvornikii and their Duties—Establishments of the very
 Wealthy.

SOME of the modern houses are veritable colonies, little villages occupied by a mixed population, almost baffling detail. The generality of these present an extensive frontage to the street; the ground-floors are used as shops, and the first and second divided into one, two, or three suites of apartments, each having as many as twenty windows towards the street, and all on the same floor; those in the *beau quartier* are occupied by *grandees*, and the attics by the most nondescript

tenantry imaginable. From either side of this imposing front, two wings diverge considerably to the rear, thus enclosing the court-yard behind on three sides; in these wings—or rather tails—are the dark corridors; dark, because one wall being the party wall to the next house, and the rooms situated in the corridor being necessarily all on one side and generally occupied, when the doors of these rooms—through the windows of which the only light is transmitted—are closed, the long passages are perfectly dark, except at one end, where they run into a square landing, communicating with the best apartments; notwithstanding this, the corridor is the great thoroughfare, and the only route of communication with the kitchen and servants' offices, which are situated beyond the double doors before described, and which are frequently left open or unlocked, so that anyone could walk up out of the street into any room in the house, offering tempting facility to thief or spy; but notwithstanding the reputed plenitude of both in these regions, I have never heard of an attempt on the part of either to take advantage of so eligible an opportunity, one which, to a London thief, would certainly be irresistible. Some of the most modern of these mansions—for example, that of which our *appartement* formed a section—occupy a large portion of two streets; in such cases the floors are each divided into three suites,

each suite having a spacious stone staircase in common with the one or two floors above it.

Every fashionable "appartement" has at least one English fireplace, in which coal is burnt, the consumption of coal being deemed quite as cheap as that of wood. The usual mode, however, of heating is by means of stoves in each apartment, or by flues regulated at the basement; the latter is a recent adoption, and although possessing advantages over the old system, yet, careful mothers fancy this method is conducive to pulmonary complaints, although, from experience, I should think this was mere prejudice. As before remarked, these modern mansions contain a most heterogeneous host; for example, our neighbours, on the same floor, were a General of brigade and a Seigneur from Moscow. On the floor above, a rich widow, with four daughters, a civilian general and his wife, and a physician and family. Below, a dyer, a glove-maker, a milliner, a hair-dresser, a confectioner, a Berlin-wool shop, a tea-dealer, and all as perfectly separated as if in as many different houses; while in the attic regions will be found a mixed population of considerable interest, and living more in common. This is the most curious part of a modern Russian house, presenting a scarcely describable contrast to the elegance and refinement of the salons below, so replete with light, and space, and air, and perfumes; a portion

of her *voisinage* which a Russian *élégante* on the *bel étage* has probably never visited even in thought, and which presents the strangest confusion of noble and ignoble, bond and free, dirt and its reverse, squalor and comfort, that ever entered into the mind to conceive; and to explore which, it is necessary to go round into another street, and so, entering the vast square court-yard which belongs in common to the whole house, to ascend one of the three inner stone staircases to the landing of the attic story, where a low broad folding-door stops further progress; these doors are usually hung on very strong pulleys, the traffic being so considerable that, were it otherwise, the inhabitants of these regions would be frozen out, as the lower or entrance doors from the court-yard below are seldom closed during the day throughout the winter.

Pushing open this swing door, the stranger enters; instantly it closes upon him, and he finds himself engulfed, not in "outer" but inner darkness, black as midnight, not the faintest glimmer, or even speck, of light affording the remotest elucidation to his whereabouts; while the hot air, laden with the fumes of sour cabbage, coffee, soup, Russian leather and pitch, threatens to overpower him. But the sounds are even more diversified than the odours. Within a pace of him the clear full accents of the native lan-

guage meet his ear; a little way removed, the slow boorish-sounding German; still farther on, the loquacious *petit maitre* French; some being the voices of age, others of youth, with which chime in such accompaniments as the laughter of children, the shrill scream of some fractious child, the ping-ping twang of the Russian guitar, the singing of canaries, the snarling of dogs, the mewling of cats, and even the crowing of cocks and cackling of laying hens, and the plaintive coo of turtle doves; the whole neighbourhood seems teeming with animal life, but all within closed doors. Suddenly one of these doors, at the farther end of a corridor, long as a street, opens, emitting from the window of the room to which it belongs a streak of light, which falls like a chalk line across the dark perspective, shadowing forth faintly the outlines of a range of doors, situated on one side only, the other being a long dead wall. On a more minute survey, as the eye becomes accustomed to the murky twilight, he discovers that several passages diverge from the spot where he still stands, near the entrance-door, veritable *cul de sacs*, without air or outlet, except from the windows of the one-sided line of small chambers. In these dark murderous-looking passages or galleries are located people of all nations, and tongues, and grades of principle as well as of politics, settled down as Russian subjects.

The cook of the General on the first floor, together with his wife, lived in the apartment next the door, a neat sunny little place, with flowers in the two broad window-sills, and numberless gay paintings and prints on its walls, among which were the Tzar and Tzaritza, the former in red hair and a bright blue coat!

Next to the cook lived a French refugee, who existed as he could, chiefly by teaching the guitar, having pupils for this accomplishment among most of the footmen in the neighbourhood, with whom he was a great favourite, and who took care among them to provide him with a dinner every day; indeed, several of the fair occupants of the luxurious homes below contributed many a little luxury to the meagre *ménage* of the poor exile. Next to the Frenchman lived a dirty old dame, shut up in the same room with three pet hens and a cock, but as she gave out of her poor ability—the chief sustenance of her life being the product of her live stock—to her poor neighbour, we must esteem her as a worthy citizen of this community. Next to her and her noisy *protégés*, lived two French girls, employed to make up into wreaths and bouquets the beautiful artificial flowers imported here by their flourishing countrywomen, the mistresses of elegant *magasins* in the city. Beyond these, and at the very end of the blind alley, lived two laundresses belonging to the

widow with the three daughters on the second story.

But the neighbouring perspective was a more distingué locale. Here were located a bachelor priest — scarcely more than a student; a tailor; the son of a governor of one of the interior governments—a cadet—with his servant, who was his bootmaker as well as valet, in the next apartment to him; this was the youth's home when he was not at college, for all his relations lived in the interior, and though he had many acquaintances, this little retreat rendered him independent of any of them, and at a very trifling outlay per annum. On the other side of the servant lived a poor Custom-house clerk, a worthy, honest, high-minded, middle-aged man—a bachelor, of course—and the brother of the *civile* General on the *bel étage*. For twelve long years this poor clerk had occupied the same subordinate place at his chief's table, never having risen a step from the day of his introduction, though mere boys had stepped over his head, and this simply because neither he nor his brother would cringe for place, or bribe their fellow men; but as we are accustomed to these things in England, let me not farther animadvert upon the conduct of others; here, at least, the government is not to blame. His brother, the General, had been in a position more immediately under the eyes of the Tzar, who, always

glad to have "the right man in the right place," had never lost sight of him; but the poor Custom-house clerk was not likely to come within the range—though almost universal—of the Emperor's observation, in the Custom-house above all places, and therefore the poor fellow lived on, day after day, hoping that the next might bring him promotion; always happy, singing Russian opera, and accompanying himself on the guitar, and constantly talking of what his wife was to be like. His brother, the General, though by no means "well off," paid his house-rent for him, and made him board with himself, the clerk's own poor salary being barely sufficient to find him in necessities for his wardrobe. He was a great friend of the young cadet, and, though both nobles of considerable rank, they lived in brotherly communion with the young priest, and the servant of the young man attended to the trio, who appeared to be all as happy and contented as possible.

Again, in another perspective were a couple of law students — this, like that of the cadet, being a mere temporary home during holidays—a chorus-singer, her husband and child, one of the workmen from the shops below, and a nurse's help* and her daughter.

* There is in St. Petersburg, and in all the cities of Russia, a body of women who go out to nurse, or receive patients at their own homes.

Above these attics are the cherdacks, or lofts, where the linen of the different inmates is dried. And now, descending to the court-yard, we find the stables and coach-houses situated at the rear of the shops, and under the *bel étage*, the horses thus having the benefit of the same heat which dominates the rest of the house. The coach-houses of the Russian nobility occupy a large space, being required to accommodate a variety of vehicles.

To possess a private carriage of some kind is almost a necessity, the distances being great, as the city is built over so large an extent of ground that the most resolute pedestrian is put *hors de combat* in no time.

Every family of even mediocre pretension has a travelling-carriage, a brougham, droschkii, and sledge; while the extravagance of the wealthy in this respect is so excessive as almost to call for a renewal of the decree of the Tzar Theodore, brother of Peter the Great. In his day, the prodigality of the rich in horseflesh and carriages had attained such outrageous proportions that he felt himself called upon to put a stop to it, restricting his nobility to a close carriage and a sledge for the winter; these to be drawn by a pair of horses on ordinary occasions, by four on high days and holidays, and at a wedding by six! while those of inferior grade

might use a sledge drawn by one horse for winter, and in the summer they were to ride on horse-back.

But every great lady now has her four-horse coach, barouche, brougham, travelling-carriages, four-horse sledge and single sledge, double droschkii and single droschkii, and six or eight horses at least. Every great lord has his travelling equipages of various kinds, his caleche, and droschkii, and sledges of different degrees; and every youth, of any means at all, keeps his droschkii, sledge, coachman, valet, and horses, though now many find it a better plan "to job" a turn-out for the season. The centre of every great court-yard is occupied by haylofts and stable storehouses, round which is piled, in formidable ramparts, the firewood for the supply of the whole mansion, and which, except during the night, when the gates of the yard are closed, is open to the inroads of the envious from without. Thefts on the wood stores do occur, but they are few in proportion to the opportunity presented.

Belonging to every house is a dvornick, or man of the court-yard, a *concierge*, who dwells in cellar apartments under the *porte cochère*, or in some locality contiguous, whence he is summoned by a bell; in large establishments there are several of these *dvornickii*; they are generally active, intelligent fellows, doing their duty with alacrity, and a

politeness inimitable; there is, moreover, an aid-de-camp, who attends to the stoves and lamps. In the mansion of which our home is a part, there are four dvornickii; their duties are manifold, some of them onerous, and others conducive to the comfort, not only of their employers, but of the public at large; for a dvornick is obliged to keep not only the pavement in front of his house clean, but half way across the street, and so particular are the police on this head, that I have seen a dvornick called out to pick up a few loose straws which a moment before had blown out of a Swiss colonist's market-cart.

In the generality of houses, the landlord supplies the staircase light, fuel, and water, which necessary is conveyed in large vats, placed on carts, from the canals or the Neva; and these items, by no means inconsiderable, are included in the rent.

The same custom, or nearly so, extends to the residences of the ministers or other public officers of the crown, who are found in house-rent, fuel, water, and light. The only difference between the dwellings just described and those of the *haute noblesse*, or wealthy aristocrats, is the exclusive occupation of an entire mansion, unshared by other than their own suites or servants; still the internal arrangements are the same, though on a more extensive scale, for, however much

“perpendicular” space they may possess, the heads of the family make one floor their home, the “horizontal” house, or “flat” arrangement, being universally preferred to the perpendicular *maison* of the English.

The heads of these large establishments never think of ascending above the first floor. The *rez-de-chaussée*, or a portion of it, is devoted to the master and his sons, if they are grown up, who can thus pop in and out at all hours of the day and night without disturbing *Madame*, who occupies her private suite on the floor above, and who, in like manner, may go and come without disturbing the younger children, who, with their tutors, governesses, and nurses, are domiciled in the second.

In all this the tone is taken from the Imperial example, for the Tzar has his *rez-de-chaussée*, and the Tzaritza her *bel étage*, and the *dames d'honneur*, and the court minister and other officials, *le second*.

CHAPTER VI.

Housekeeping—Rent—Yellow Tea—Wines—Wearing Apparel—Furniture—Bread and Meat—Price of Game—Fish—Butter, Cream, and Eggs—An Establishment of the Middle Class—Expenditure—Contracting for Dinner—Store-Room—Young Lady's Household Duties—Clever Page.

HOUSEKEEPING in St. Petersburg, although more expensive than in most continental cities, is considerably exaggerated by foreigners generally. House-rents average about the same as in London, but then it must be remembered that fuel, water, and hall or staircase lights are included under the head of rent. When it is considered that the wood fuel used in the capital is as costly as coals in London, this item may be regarded as an important one. Water is another expensive necessary, as every drop used in an establishment, however far removed it may be from the Neva or

the canals, has to be conveyed from one or other of those sources. Where the above items are not found by the landlord, the rent is proportionably lower.

Every necessary of life is very cheap, and the luxuries, though dearer than in England, are superior, for they are pure. Refined sugar* is as much as 9d. per pound, but it is of first-rat quality. Only the very best raw sugars enter Russia. The Tzar Nicholas† prohibited all slave-grown sugar.

Teas are also dearer than in England, but they are superlative. The trash sold to the English market would not be tolerated by the poorest moujic in Russia, and the Chinese are perfectly well acquainted with this fact. Being all conveyed overland, the tea used in Russia arrives free from those drawbacks to which it is exposed by a long sea-voyage. Many attribute to this cause solely the superiority of the tea drunk in Russia, but it is well known here that the teas are of a superior gathering, and that the Chinese supply their neighbours and best customers with

* Sugar extracted from beet-root, as well as from melons, has been successfully manufactured in the South of Russia. That made from the melon is hard, coarse-grained, sparkling, and very sweet, and promises great things in those governments where melons are plentiful as mushrooms.

† The late Emperor Nicholas was a coadjutor with England, Prussia, and Portugal in the suppression of the slave trade.

their choicest article. His Celestial Majesty sends periodically to His Imperial Majesty of all the Russias an offering of a celebrated mixture, the concentrated essence of the finest teas, a mere pinch of which is sufficient to flavour a considerable quantity of the ordinary tea. The price of this mixture per pound, were it purchasable, would amount to something like £50, but as the Emperor of China keeps this Imperial mixture in his own gift, it is chiefly distributed as presents.

The introduction of tea into Russia has been productive of the happiest effects, having done much towards supplanting the use of vodka, or rye whisky.

Russians of all ranks use tea as a necessary of life, some of the middle and lower orders taking it several times a day. Among the tradesmen and priesthood, it is the treat with which they regale their friends. Tea, "all hot," is hawked about the streets of all large cities during the winter; and from many a cellar-shop the pedestrian saunterer through the streets of St. Petersburg may, during the spring, at all hours of the day, see the sociable brass samoëvar fuming away, and moujik devotees standing round sipping their "portions" of tea out of glass tumblers, on the top of each of which floats a slice of lemon.

The lowest priced tea is from 4s. 6d. to 7s. 6d. per pound, Russian, which is but three-quarters of

an English pound, but even this is far superior to that used in Western Europe. The ordinary tea used by the middle and higher classes, is that called flower tea, which is from 10s. to two guineas per pound. There is now a very fashionable tea used in the higher circles which is quite yellow. It is very rare, and consequently costly, being from three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half guineas per pound. This new tea takes the place of coffee after dinner.

During fast, when cream is prohibited, tea is drunk with a preparation of almonds, a slice of lemon, rum, or preserves. At all times, gentlemen prefer it with lemon or rum.

Another luxury, in the quality of which the Russians are very particular, is wine. They never grudge price for a good thing, but they will have the best; therefore, the choicest wines of France find their best market in Russia. The largest consumers of champagne are the Russians, who, even on ordinary occasions, are most profuse of this costly wine. They eschew German champagne as they would poison. Brandied wines, such as port or sherry, which they denominate English wines, are placed on their dinner-tables, but French and Rhine wines are generally preferred. Wines made in the Crimea are beginning to make their appearance at the tables of the proprietors on whose estates the vine is principally

cultivated, and in all probability the Petersburgers will soon be importing "Château Aloupka" and "Crasnoë," from the South of their Fatherland, as formidable rivals of "Château Lafitte" and "Margaux."

Linens, silks, brocades, velvets, de laines, foulardes, broadcloths, baizes, printed cottons, muslins, &c., of Russian manufacture, are sufficiently good for the wear of the noblest, and are very reasonable in price. Ladies' boots and shoes, Russian made, are cheap, neat, and easy. The valets of most military men make their masters patent-leather boots, which are inimitable as to fit, probably from the fact of their working so constantly to one size and pattern. From whatever cause, the boots of the Russian gentlemen, like those of the French, are the perfection of boots; but boots and shoes, both for ladies and gentlemen, are all made very light. They have no idea of our heavy double or treble-soled protectives for the winter, goloshes and fur overalls being so generally used for wet and cold weather.

Household furniture, of ordinary German and Russian make, is cheap, but superficially put together; the very best, however, is procurable at Tour and Gamp's, the Holland and Gillow of St. Petersburg.

Butcher's meat is superlative and reasonable, averaging about 4d. per pound. The Ukraine

supplies St. Petersburg with oxen, Archangel with calves, and Astrakan with sheep, of the large-tail kind; but mutton is very little used in the Russian *cuisine*, veal being in greatest favour, and, next to that, beef.

Black bread is three farthings a pound; salt about the same price; vegetables proportionately cheap. Potatoes are dear at any price, for they are seldom good, at least according to English taste, which prefers them dry and floury, while here they are waxy.

Game is very plentiful; in the interior it is held in such little estimation that the peasants deem it scarcely worth the trouble of snaring, or cooking when it is caught; but in the north it is scarcer, and consequently dearer, the average prices in St. Petersburg being:—for grouse, per brace, from 2s. to 3s.; for kourapatka, or Scotch partridge, from 1s. 6d. to 2s.; cock of the woods, from 2s. 6d. to 4s.; snipes, 1s. 6d.; riabtshic, or wood-hen, which is very plentiful and in great demand, by the foreign residents particularly, is from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per brace; wild ducks, from 2s. to 3s. per pair; fowls, the same price; a goose, from 1s. 6d. to 3s.; turkeys, from 5s. to 7s. each. Bohemia and Hungary supply pheasants of fine quality.

The usual kinds of fish eaten at Russian tables are salmon, which is always sold by the pound,

averaging from 10d. to 2s. ; sterlit, the royal, or, rather, imperial fish of Russia, is found only in the Caspian Sea, and in the great arterial Volga and its tributaries, and is consequently rare at St. Petersburg, and generally a very costly dish there. An ordinary sized sterlit costs from one to nine guineas, according to the season, but often considerably more than this ; indeed, as much as fifty guineas have been given for one. Koroushka, or smelts, are from one to three farthings each ; soudack, a native fish of excellent quality, is from 4d. to 8d. per pound.

Eggs are from 8d. to 9d. for ten ; these are new laid, but Finnish eggs are procurable for 4d. and 5d. per ten.

New milk is 2d. a quart ; cream, from 1s. to 2s. a quart ; butter, from 1s. 4d. to 2s. per pound, and is by no means good, butter being at the present day in Russia nearly as scarce a commodity as it was in ancient Greece ; neither is cheese a necessary of Russian life ; it is seldom made in the country, that used by the wealthy being principally Gruyère.

The Cossacks and Circassians use curd in great quantities, subsisting upon it for months together, their drink being mare's milk, peculiarly prepared ; they carry the curd in a bladder, compressed. The Russians use curd in a fresh state ; but appear to have little idea of making it into

cheese, although, from all reports, they might compete with any country in its production.

The management of a Russian establishment is of the easiest description, when conducted upon the same systematic principles as those adopted by a considerable portion of the middle class; let us take for example that of one of our friends. The entire family consists of five ladies and two gentlemen; the rank of its head, that of a colonel; the income and expenditure of this portion of it, including every item, about £1,500 per annum; the servants are serfs, with two exceptions, a German maid, and a soldier's daughter; the German maid attends exclusively to the mistress of the house, makes her dresses, dresses her hair, makes her bed, and attends entirely to her demi-bedroom, no domestic having the *entrée* into this apartment, except to light the stove, and dry-rub the floor.

There are two Russian maids, who perform the same offices for the young ladies; making all their dresses, bonnets, and even corsets, covering an old parasol for country wear, *à merveille*, and managing many other economic contrivances of the same kind, which would confound an English lady's-maid. In the interior these handy-fingered Abigails are invaluable; most of them can knit, some can manufacture lace, and even weave carpets.

The cook, who among Russians of any pretension is always a man, caters; all the year round he is allowed the same amount per head daily, for fish, flesh, fowl, and vegetables; he therefore provides what he likes every day, serving fish, soup, fowl, or game, and flesh, two or three kinds of vegetables, and a dish—sometimes two—of sweets, fasts of course excepted. The German maid is served from the family table, but the other servants have their own dishes, their *schee* and black bread, and their raw herrings, and so forth, at noon, and their fragrant Mocha at four o'clock.

The cook is at liberty to do what he pleases with the remains of the daily fare; he may sell it either hot or cold, which he generally manages to do, to the neighbouring *tractir*, or coffee-shop, or to some of the people in the attics; this is a system here. The Emperor contracts with his cooks, paying so much per head for dinner; the Grand-Duchess Marie the same. I dined one day with a lady from the interior, who, during her temporary residence in the capital, took an "appartement" near the Leuchtenberg Palace, and our dinner of several courses was supplied by the cook of the Grand-Duchess. On ordinary occasions, this lady and her companion dined very bountifully every day, after this fashion, at three shillings each.

All the minor details for the *cuisine* are provided by the lady of the house, who either lays in large quantities at a time, or by the grocer or Italian warehouseman who calls for orders every day. Such stores are kept in the *cludavoë*, or store-room, which, in a well-regulated house, usually contains a stock-in-trade of which any young dealer might be proud.

The *cludavoë* in modern houses is light, lofty, and airy, and is provided with ranges of shelves, decreasing in width as they rise upwards, the lowest being about the width of an ordinary shop-counter. Before the windows this counter is furnished with numerous drawers; into these are stowed spices, sago, tapioca, arrowroot, currants, raisins, white haricot beans, green-peas, maccaroni, dates, rice, different kinds of dried fruits, &c., while sacks of flour, green coffee-berries, manna-croup, grayshnia, cassia, and other serials indigenous to Russia, salt, &c., are stowed away underneath, side by side with kegs of Holstein butter—for cooking—loaves of sugar, Gruyère cheese, hives of honey-comb, large glass jars of pickles and preserves, stone bottles of refined lamp-oil. The smaller shelves on one side are adorned with the best china and glass, packed neatly, saucer within saucer, and plate upon plate, and little pyramids of cut-glass, so as to occupy the least possible space; dinner and dessert services, and

extra lamps and lamp-glasses, all smothered in hay, occupy the floor underneath ; while the small shelves half-way up the walls are closely packed with small glass jars, containing choice fruits, preserved whole, either sweet or pickled ; flasks of Florence and sunflower oil, a drum or two of figs, a box of dessert raisins, one of almonds, several cases of sardines, wax and stearin candles of all sizes, soap, pearlash, and soda occupy the back of the counter. Beneath the small shelves, and from various projections about the room, hang bunches of isinglass, strings of dried mushrooms—for fasts—and wreaths of little round biscuits called cringles, or baranki, and accumulations of small baskets, like fruit-pottles, in which bonbons have been brought to the house. On the floor, in a corner, is fixed a neat sugar-nipper, and in another direction a rather large weighing-machine, two smaller-sized scales occupying the counter before the windows.

The presiding genius of the *cludavoë* in most houses is a “Mamselle,” or housekeeper, but in some cases the eldest daughter officiates, and hither she repairs before coffee is served in the morning—no matter how late she may have been up the previous night, and sometimes morning—to give out the stores for the day ; and here at the same time comes the cook for his multitudinous items. It is his duty to break the sugar,

and to give out the oil and candles, &c., to the footman, and soap, soda, &c., to the laundresses — of whom there are two ; he also gives notice to his mistress when any of the numerous bags want replenishing, or the bottles or drawers are getting low, the sugar nearly out, &c. And now he takes his departure, carrying along with him the coffee for breakfast, which he has just ground at the mill fixed in the cludavoë ; he also roasts coffee every week, sufficient for the wants of the week.

The young lady now fills her sugar-glass, her cream-jug, and butter-cooler. These latter condiments are brought every morning from one of the German colonies in the suburbs, and are kept fresh by being placed on a ledge for their express accommodation, situated outside the “fortitchka.”* After presiding at coffee, our young friend’s household duties have terminated until dinner-

* The windows in every house are double during the winter. In the summer the windows are single, and open in the centre like shop-doors, but as soon as the cold sets in, an entire window, without any means of opening, is placed inside the summer or French window, and is cemented into its place. But one of the two or more windows in a room, is provided with a movable pane, opening inwards like a door, while the outside or summer window has a corresponding pane which opens outside. This is called a “fortitchka.” Strangers on their first arrival are much interested in this contrivance for admitting the external air, and exclaim in their respective tongue, “*Qu’est-ce que c’est ?*” or “*Was ist das ?*” by which phrases these little double glass doors are as often called as by their Russian appellation of “fortitchka.”

time, when, just before the soup is brought in, a plate of salad, consisting of chicory, cucumber, onion, beet-root, small salad, &c., with sugar, oil, vinegar, and all the other necessary adjuncts in the composition of a salad, are disposed upon a covered side-table, whither, according to almost universal custom, the eldest daughter repairs to prepare it.

At tea-time our young friend makes another trip to the cludavoë, and once more fills her sugar-basin, cream-jug, and butter-dish, and if gentlemen are present she provides herself besides with a glass of black-currant preserve for their tea, the footmen providing the lemon and the rum for their use. This is the sum total of the young lady's household duties per diem.

In addition to the servants already mentioned as belonging to the establishment in question, are coachman and postilion, both of whom live with their four horses in the stables, one of the stalls being screened off and fitted up as a little room. There is besides a youth or page who waits upon one of the gentlemen in the family, and who, young as he is, can equally well valet his master, wait at table, help the cook, drive the carriage, play the guitar, sing, dance, ride on horseback, or write a letter; and who prefers staying with his own people upon merely nominal wages to serving strangers at ten rubles per month.

CHAPTER VII.

Visit to the Palace—The Tzar and the Mirror—The Hero's Gallery—St. George's Hall—Salle Blanche—China Vases—The Court Minister's mode of reaching his Upper Chambers—A Garden on the Bel Etage—The friendly Canary—Chambre D'or—The Tzar's Bed—The Young Princes and their General—The Grand Duke Constantine's Cabinet—The Lord High Admiral at ten years old—Locale of the Ladies-in-Waiting—A Story of the Floor Above—Polished Granite Atlantes—Peter's Gallery—Relics from Kertch—The Duke of Wellington's House in St. Petersburg—The Duke's Regiment.

THE Court is on the eve of its return to the capital, and our excellent friend, General Von V——, desirous that we should see the house of his Tzar to the best advantage, made his appearance *chez nous* on the day before its coming, kindly offering to take us over the Winter Palace.

Quite delighted, away we sped, and soon reached the Neva, or north side of the Palace,

and alighting at a door not far from that into which we had seen the Tzar disappear on the occasion of our first drive, found ourselves in a large pillared vestibule; here two civilian dignitaries, friends of the General, awaited us; here also we were deprived of our wraps. Strangers visiting this superb palace are required to appear in more careful toilet than ordinary—gentlemen in dress coats, or rather, costumed as they would be to pay a visit of ceremony to a lady of their acquaintance, or to a gentleman of higher rank than themselves.

Following our leaders through a region of marble columns, which seemed to fill all space, stretching north and south, and east and west, we arrived, after several *detours*, at the grand entrance and staircase, the multitudinous white marble columns, gorgeous gilding, and colossal mirrors of which broke upon the vision, a scene of refined magnificence, rare even in a palace. Crimson cloth covered the broad marble staircase, throwing up the pure white sculptured Parian and rich gilding with telling effect.

To describe in detail, or even to visit in detail, a little world like this, which covers an area of 400,000 cubic feet, and contains more than 500 apartments, might serve as one of a new batch of wonders to set up a modern Hercules. It was therefore proposed, and unanimously carried, that

we should confine our visit to the great Chambers of State, and to those, so infinitely more interesting, inhabited by the different members of this united and amiable Imperial family.

In furtherance of this plan, we were at once conducted into the most magnificent of the state apartments, viz. the grand banqueting hall, 190 feet in length and 100 in height, and decorated with noble rows of marble columns, the walls being interlaid with rich gilding, and adorned with mirrors of fabulous dimensions. The sight of these mirrors recalled one of the many anecdotes recorded of the presence of mind of the Tzar Nicholas, so characteristic of him.

On occasion of the great fire which destroyed the interior of this palace some years ago, a mirror of immense size lined a portion of the walls of one of the state apartments. Knowing its value, and, moreover, that it was highly prized by the Emperor as being the largest one of the kind ever made in Russia, the soldiers employed to carry off as much as they could from the ravages of the fire, resolved at all risks to save the Emperor's favourite. The devouring flames already encircled it, but still the determined fellows laboured away, loosening the fixtures, even after repeated commands from the Tzar himself that they would leave it to its fate. Seeing that their destruction was inevitable if they persisted,

the monarch drew his sword, and, by a Herculean blow with the hilt of it, cracked the mirror from top to bottom.

Next in size comes the military gallery, 180 feet long; the walls are covered with the portraits of heroes, mostly Russian, though a few foreigners, who have deserved to be well remembered by Russia, have a place here. A full-length of our "Iron Duke" occupies a prominent position among these warriors. This is one of the most interesting collections of paintings I ever remember to have seen. The General tells us that the great aim of his life, from the moment he first looked at those rows of heroes when a boy in a cadet corps, has been to emulate these men. The effect of this gallery when lighted up is described as being very grand. The most prominent description of decorations are innumerable pendent wreaths, resembling laurel, which, placed near the ceiling, look as if about to descend on the brows of the phalanx of heroes beneath. On public days at Court, this gallery is generally crowded with the military youth, who regard these portraits, for the hundredth time, with a renewal of interest and appreciation.

The next apartment of importance in size and decoration is St. George's Hall, 150 feet long by 70 in breadth. In this hall the Chapter of the military order of St. George is held; also the

imposing ceremonial of taking the oath of fealty to the reigning Tzar and his successor, which is administered to every Prince of the Imperial family on attaining his majority. Ambassadors are received here, &c.

But, exceeding all the others in the simple beauty of design and the chasteness of its decorations, is the Salle Blanche. This splendid salle is used on all the great ceremonies of State, such as Imperial marriages, christenings, &c., which are interlarded with religious observances, and indeed this may be said to extend to nearly all ceremonies, for nothing is done in Russia of any importance, whether public or private, unprefaced by prayer.

Contiguous to the Salle Blanche is the private chapel of the Imperial family, refulgent in grace and richness of decoration. And now, circulating through endless corridors, ante-rooms, noble chambers, replete with statuary, bronzes, gilding, malachite vases, costly inlaid floors, painted ceilings, &c., we found ourselves in a long narrow stone passage on the *bel étage*, crossing which, we entered a handsome chamber overlooking the river. Paintings, screens, tables laden with objects of vertu, and every elegance and comfort except a carpet, adorned the apartment in profusion; but the chief attractions, in our eyes, were a thick-set row of most inviting velvet-cushioned chairs.

This apartment was an official waiting-room belonging to the minister of the Court, whose private residence and *Chancellerie* are both situated on this side of the Winter Palace, but on the story above. The minister, who is no longer young, is exceedingly stout—and bluff, and gruff, and very uncourtier-like—and the effort of ascending and descending is doubtless not quite so easy as it has been, and therefore a curious machine has been made by order of the Tzar, which resembles a large close cage, or hall-porter's chair, on a large scale, into which he enters at the basement of the building, and, closing a kind of wicket, to prevent his tumbling out, takes his seat and rings a bell, which sets some invisible machinery to work, and thus, like Cupid entrapped by the Houris in their silver net, he is wafted upwards.

Here we were joined by another Imperial official who now took the lead, the party following him along the passage before mentioned to an ante-room, gloomy and dark, a preparatory twilight doubtless to the burst of light, and song, and beauty, which broke upon us as we emerged into a gallery, one side of which, being composed of glass, presented, beyond, the vision of a miniature Eden—gravel walks, trees, shrubs, fountains, and flower-beds, suspended as it were in mid-air, and inhabited by numerous feathered choristers of

many foreign climes, that filled this Elysée with their songs of gladness. Several superb French lilacs, in full bloom near the entrance of this retreat, appeared to be the favourite resort of numerous canaries, some of which, perched upon the higher branches, were most enthusiastic in their greeting; standing on tip-toe, they sang as if their little throats would burst; while others, more coy, popped out their yellow heads from amidst the profusion of green leaves where they had taken refuge on the entrance of the strangers.

These birds and flowers are the especial pets of the Empress, some of the former being exceedingly tame. One familiar beauty alighted on the edge of the General's epaulet, pecking at the golden bullion as if he recognised something that he was perfectly well acquainted with—some privileged pet of Her Majesty's, probably, who takes liberties with the shoulder-knots of her Imperial lord; for in his hours of relaxation—though “they are few and far between”—they say his Majesty joins the Empress, and from a debate at the Senate, involving the most momentous subjects, he can descend to the minutiae of his consort's flowers and birds, entering into all her simple domestic pleasures with as much devotion as if they were affairs of State.

With many “a lingering look behind,” we took leave of this fairy region.

We proceeded thence into a handsome apartment called the *Chambre d'or*, or ante-room, belonging to the Tzaritza's suite of rooms. In this chamber and the adjoining ones, it is the delight of the younger Grand Dukes to drive their Imperial mother in an easy wheel-chair. On one of these occasions, just as the brothers, side-by-side, were propelling the Tzaritza at unwonted speed, and were entering the *Chambre d'or*, whom should they meet, coming from his *cabinet d'affaires* in an opposite direction, but their Imperial father, and what was more, their Tzar—and what was of more importance still in that Tzar's eyes—their General! The young Grand Dukes fully understood the nature of the “fix” they were in, for to pull up stock-still in a second, like Circassian or Cossack blood-horses, was impossible, and to pass their superior officer without stopping to make the necessary salute, which is rather a lengthy affair, was equally impossible, for the indignity of arrest would assuredly have followed such a breach of military discipline, and that was not to be thought of for a moment; so leaving the impetus-propelled chair to its fate, they faced about, “heads up, arms down, heels together,” until their General—who could scarcely refrain from laughter—he is said to have indulged in a loud peal at the other end of the gallery—had passed out. The Empress, meanwhile, made

the entire *trajet* of the Chambre d'or, the impetus having only expended itself as she neared the ranges of chairs which flanked the apartment, and where she received the dutiful apology of her "younker" sons with her usual affability.

Here we entered this same estimable lady's drawing-room, or "cabinet," as it is called, a charming apartment, replete with soft luxurious lounges and mossy-like carpet, and resembling that of any wealthy lady of good taste, embellished with objects of artistic beauty; but the sentiment of this mother's cabinet was concentrated in the miniatures of three of the loveliest children it was possible for the eye to rest upon. These were the likenesses of the young Grand Duchesses, Marie, the eldest, being now the widow of the Duke de Leuchtenberg—the grandson of Josephine — Alexandrine, the Tzar's favourite daughter, who died several years since; and Olga, the wife of the Crown Prince of Würtemberg, and the loveliest woman in Europe.

The view of the great Plain of St. Isaac from this room is grand and majestic. Directly opposite is the triumphal arch erected in commemoration of the return of the Russians after the occupation of Paris, with the superb column of Alexander intervening mid-way. To the left, a semi-circular range of handsome mansions, forming the Foreign office and the private residences of

the elder and younger Counts Nesslerode; the fine buildings in the same style, stretching away to the right, form a grand open space which serves as parade ground when the Champs de Mars is unfit, which, being graveled, is generally the case on the melting of the snow in the Spring and fall.

From this apartment the party diverged into the Imperial bed-chamber, a large, airy, and well-furnished room, minus any of that gilded discomfort which must be insupportable even to those most accustomed to the weight of such trammels. A capacious double-bed occupied a prominent position, and at the foot of it, the stranger's eye rests with enquiry upon a bare-looking camp bedstead of iron, upon which is stretched a green morocco-covered mattress, stuffed as hard as a board, a pillow, *en suite*, covered with a linen slip, a pair of fine sheets, and an Indian shawl-like counterpane, lined with silk, and behold the bed of the Tzar!

From this interesting locale, the explorers passed on through a hundred minor apartments of State, sleeping and reception rooms, belonging to the suite of the Grand Duke Alexander, the heir—for the heir of Russia always lives under the same roof with the reigning sovereign; the other sons remove to their own establishments on their marriage, or on their attaining their majority—to the apartments of the younger Grand Dukes. That

of Constantine is particularly interesting, especially to an English visitor, for one principal reason—that he is a sailor. “Jolly,” generous-hearted, and active, not a mere landsman, with a theoretical smatter of his calling, but one who, like our sailor-king, worked his way up, and knows how to do the duty of a ship as well as any man. The principal feature of the Grand Duke’s cabinet is the model of a ship, fully rigged, and large enough to enable him to climb over every part of it; here he took his first lessons in that noble profession which tends to make men good as well as great, and he appears to have entered upon his career with all the ardour of his energetic and enterprising character; even as a child he was earnest in everything he undertook. Sincere and truthful himself, he believed that men and things were exactly what they appeared to be, and when experience taught him otherwise, his first impulses were to have done with them for ever.

The following anecdote, one of many to the same effect, shows the character of the young prince in all its force, and equally applies to him up to the present moment. When yet a mere child, the prince, from his sailor tendencies, was playfully styled the Admiral, which some little make-believe ceremony had tended to establish in his own mind as his right and title, the young chief taking it as a matter of fact that he was

thereby duly installed, not only in the duties of his onerous position, but armed with its privileges also.

Soon after this event it happened that, practising some of his exercises among the rigging of a real frigate, the Grand Duke fell overboard. A young sailor, who happened to be on duty near the spot, jumped in after him, and seizing the prince as he rose to the surface of the water, bore him on board. When recovered from his fright, and relieved of his wet clothes, the Admiral sent for his deliverer, embraced him, thanked him, told him that he intended to make an officer of him, and ordered him to go immediately to the Admiralty and get his outfit and money. The unsophisticated lad, as simple as the child, did as he was ordered, and hurried on his way, rejoicing at this unexpected piece of good luck. Arrived at the Admiralty, he delivered his message, telling how the Grand Duke Constantine, Lord High Admiral of the Fleet, had promoted him. Instead of money, or an order for his uniform, the poor fellow's request was received with a shout of laughter. Making the best of his way back to his ship, he related the particulars of this reception to the prince, whose indignation was extreme. The boy-admiral walked up and down the cabin for some time in a state of great excitement, and at length having resolved upon a course of action,

his Imperial Highness sat down, and with his heart almost bursting with offended pride and disappointment, he indited a letter to the Emperor, respectfully begging to resign an appointment no longer worth holding, since it did not permit him to reward in an adequate manner a brave fellow who had perhaps saved his life; and therefore, being but an empty title, he would have nothing further to do with it. The Tzar, it is said, had enough to do to propitiate the embryo-Admiral, even by a very liberal settlement on the lucky youth who had rescued his son.

Above the *bel étage* in the Winter Palace, reside the ladies in actual waiting on the Empress; there are several hundreds who enjoy this distinction as a mere honorary one, whose only duty is to swell out the Court pageant on high days, the members of the order forming an imposing appearance in their velvet trains as the Imperial *cortége* sweeps through a living avenue formed by these diamond-covered belles; but the duty of the ladies and young ladies in actual waiting is permanent, so many taking it in turn to relieve the others, three days per week being, as it is called, "de jure," and three days free.

On the floor above these ladies, the numerous servants employed in this little world are located; many of these are English; the chief dresser to the Empress is English, as are most of the

nurses. The nurse of the Grand Duke Alexander's heir is an Englishwoman, and though superannuated on a comfortable competency, still retains her apartments in the Winter Palace, and in the summer lives in a bower situated in the midst of the Imperial gardens at Peterhoff.

Above this attic locale of the servants is the universal cherdack, and in connection with these Imperial drying lofts a curious story was related to us, the narrator having been an eye-witness of what he told, and his word unimpeachable.

At the time of the great fire before alluded to, the most energetic exertions were displayed by the people, one and all, to save property from the burning pile, and everywhere, and over all, dominated the form of the Tzar, who, it is said, performed as much work as three ordinary men, and by his precautions and *prévoyance* saved the lives of many.

The elder members of the Imperial family were at the theatre when the fire broke out; the younger ones in bed and asleep, from which they were removed to the Anitchikoff Palace, on the Nefsky. Intelligence was then conveyed to the Emperor, who hastened to the scene of the conflagration; his feelings may be imagined on beholding the curling flames rolling with horrid glare out at the windows of his superb home. Again and again he demanded as to the certainty

that all in the vicinity of the flames had been rescued, and he was assured that no human being remained in that particular part of the building, when, as if to refute the assertion by the most terrible evidence, heart-rending shrieks, accompanied by a strange roaring, arose from amidst the flames, apparently proceeding from the roof of the palace, and filling all who heard them with dismay. Again the cries rose, louder and louder; and now the listeners, satisfied that they were not human cries, supposed them to proceed from some unfortunate horses in the stables near, which in the confusion had been overlooked; to rescue them now was impossible, and therefore those who heard had no alternative but to leave them to their fate, when a part of the cherdack fell over, roof and all, with a mighty crash into the reeking court-yard below, carrying with it, to the amazement of all beholders, the half-burnt carcasses of several cows! while, on a portion of the loft still remaining, one miserable animal was seen running wildly about amid the flames, which soon devoured her, the last, as it was supposed, for cries were heard no more.

The narrator described, in the most inimitable manner, the blank surprise of the Tzar on beholding with his own eyes the nature of the tenantry which had been located over his Imperial head. How the animals had been conveyed up thither,

wide and easy as the stairs and passages were, was a problem, the solution of which is likely to remain a mystery. The only result of the searching inquiry instituted by the Emperor was, that those whose business it was to supply the ladies of honour with milk and cream, finding it too much trouble to go to the usual place where the cows for the supply of the palace were kept, brought the cows to them!

We had now gained the grand staircase, and taking leave at this point of the official who had so far accompanied us, we proceeded on foot, along the plain side of the palace, to the Hermitage.

The new approach to the Hermitage is one of the modern *chef-d'œuvres* of Russian design and workmanship. It consists of a gigantic portico, the roof of which is supported on the heads of colossal figures, very Goliahs in plenitude of development. These are sculptured in grey granite, and are highly polished, every one of them looking as if it had taken a lifetime to perfect. From this portico we ascended by a long broad staircase to the picture-galleries, the Louvre of St. Petersburg; here gems, belonging to every renowned school, arranged in due order, meet the admiring gaze of the onward hurrying stranger, whose chief regret is the shortness of a Russian winter's day, and the frailty of human endurance, which, com-

bined, permit but a fleeting glance at objects to which days and even weeks might be devoted with profit.

And still on, through gilded *salons*, teeming with objects of interest, to the Gallery of Peter I., so called from its containing objects belonging to that Tzar. Here are preserved his favourite horse and dog under a glass shade; the portraits of the first Catherine and her children; coins, medals, orders, precious stones in great quantities, exquisite old china, several antique ebony cabinets, resembling those of Wolsey notoriety in the long gallery at Windsor, and, everywhere scattered about, a profuse number of carved ivory pieces, of every design; these are erroneously supposed by strangers to be the handiwork of Peter, and the guide, an old soldier, even tells one that the Tzar made them all himself, but the General informed us that a very select few only were executed by Peter, the rest having merely been collected by him, or presented to him by strangers.

And now, passing through a handsome *salle*, scarcely yet finished, but furnished with a number of plain "what-not" like arrangements, enframed with panels of glass, we beheld, on their several tiers, wreaths of laurel-shaped and other leaves, having the appearance of tarnished brass and tinfoil, but in reality gold and silver; these wreaths

had been found in tumuli near the classic Kertch.*

Descending thence to the basement story, we entered the library, a large circular apartment, containing upwards of 10,000 Russian and other works, the more celebrated among the native authors having duplicates at the British Museum.

In this library is the largest vase in the world; it is sculptured in Siberian porphyry, and highly polished, the form being a graceful oval, shallow, and standing on a plain square pedestal. A party of twelve persons can be accommodated with sitting room round the edge of it. The expenditure of time, money, and care exacted by the conveyance of this modern wonder from Siberia is something almost fabulous.

From the library a door of communication opens into the hall of statuary; this was shrouded in a twilight so grey—the windows being covered with a net-work of external scaffolding, and the exterior improvements not being yet complete—

* Kertch, the ancient Panticapæum, situated on the Strait of Taman, anciently the Cimmerian Bosphorus, or channel which forms the communication between the Euxine and the Sea of Azoph, that mysterious Palus Mæotis worshipped by the Massagetæ. An English lady, who resided for some years at Kertch, told me that she had dug up in her garden there many valuable relics of Roman workmanship. A highly interesting work, called "*Souvenirs de Kertch*," has been published by M. de Sabatier, of Petersburg.

that we seemed suddenly surrounded by ghosts, many of the statues being draped in white wrappers to preserve them from the dust.

Emerging once more into a brighter light, we found ourselves in the Pompeian Court, a very tastefully decorated *salon*, furnished with tiers of shelves ascending nearly to the ceiling, upon which are ranged a prodigious number of Etruscan vases and other objects of similarly classic design, said to be the finest collection of the kind in Europe.

On our way out, in a side passage, were a number of newly-arrived relics from this interesting Kertch; these consisted of inscribed slabs, stone vessels, and graceful urn-shaped jars, some of which are almost identical with those used by the Russian peasants in the interior, in all probability copies from the Roman type, coeval with these exhumed relics themselves, and which more than one foreign traveller in Russia has irreverently termed "their black pots."

Having once more gained the entrance portico, our kind friend pointed out to us the house occupied by the great Duke of Wellington during his *séjour* of six weeks in St. Petersburg. It is situated in this faubourg of palaces, and near to the Hermitage. The object of his Grace's visit here was twofold, viz., as the representative of Great Britain, to honour the memory of the First Alex-

ander by attending his funeral; and also to inaugurate the accession of Nicholas I. From the date of this visit the Infantry of Smolensk has been called the Duke of Wellington's regiment. The Duke was much esteemed by the Russians; he had been made a Field Marshal by Alexander I.

CHAPTER VIII.

Funeral of a Russian Acquaintance—Manner of announcing a Death—The Chamber of the Dead—Burying by Torchlight—The “Aspasmos,” or Last Embrace—Heavenly Chanting—Sublime Parting Hymn—Ancient Greek Rites—“Koutië-ya,” or the Dish of the Dead.

THE morrow dawned, clear, and cold, and bright, and at an early hour we repaired to the house of the deceased General O——.

The announcement of this nobleman's demise had been made known to the Countess, some days previously, in the following manner:—

“Alexander, the son of Andrew, whose family name is O——, wishes you long life.”

During our drive to the house of mourning, my friends detailed a few particulars respecting the deceased and his family.

Alexander Andraïevitch was a civil General; he had spent a long life in the service of his country,

for which he had received an acknowledgment from the Crown in the substantial form of a handsome superannuation, and died honoured and respected by a large circle of friends, and mourned for, like a patriarch of antediluvian times, by a dozen sons and daughters, and several scores of grandchildren, leaving also a widow, still hale and hearty.

Arrived at the house, we were ushered into a *salon*, or hall, full of people; pursuing our way to the further end of this apartment, we here found the distant relatives of the family. Through a doorway, leading into an inner apartment where the corpse lay in state, issued the curling fumes of incense, and the rapid monotonous chant of the gospel reader, and ever and anon, the hysterical sob of the mourning widow or orphan.

In the centre of this chamber of the dead, uprose a pedestal, covered with crimson velvet drapery, deeply fringed with gold, and supporting a longitudinal sarcophagus-shaped receptacle, standing on four claws. This sarcophagus was also covered with crimson velvet, and lined with white satin; it contained the corpse, the hands of which were crossed upon the breast, and on these lay the picture of the deceased's patron saint, the body being arrayed in the full-dress uniform of the office under the crown held by the departed.

What a grand and solemn contrast did those finely-chiseled features, that placid countenance, and those venerable grey hairs present to all the tinsel show around ! The smile that almost rendered life-like that marble face seemed one of mockery at the butterfly trappings of earth's nobility in which they had laid him out.

At the head, as well as at the feet, of the sarcophagus, stood two immense wax candles, supported on classical-looking massive silver tripods.

The moment an individual expires, the nearest relation closes the eyes ; the body is then, according to almost universal custom on the Continent, arrayed in its ordinary dress, except where the deceased held any public appointment, in which case it is dressed in the full uniform belonging to the office. The priest then arrives, who fumigates the apartment with incense, blesses it, sprinkling with holy water ; he then reads a short prayer, and the choir, accompanying, sing a few verses, after which a prayer is offered for the repose of the departed soul. Here, for the present, ends the simple and impressive service for the dead, to be renewed when the body is deposited in the church, where it rests on its way to the place of interment, and where the solemn last kiss and final adieux are bestowed on the departed.

A practice, however, has crept into almost

general observance among the wealthy, which is not part of the church service, viz. that of employing a sub-priest to read the gospels, day and night, all the time the body remains in the house.

This is the universal preparatory ceremonial observed with respect to the dead; more or less costly, of course, according to circumstances. The coffins, or, more properly speaking, the sarcophagi, are always covered with crimson, pink, white, or blue velvet or cloth, and richly ornamented with gold or silver lace and fringe. Blue is the favourite colour with the poor for their children, when they are near a large town where such can be obtained, for in the more distant suburbs, and in the interior, the coffins of the poor, old and young, are, like those of the ancient Britons, the trunk of a tree hollowed out.

On the day of interment the streets, from the deceased's house to the church, are strewn with branches of sweet juniper.

The procession which accompanied Alexander Andraïevitch to his last home is already *en route*. First come twelve torch-bearers, wearing long black cloaks, the narrow capes and square collars of which are edged with white; large low-crowned hats, with broad brims, a foot wide, flap over face and shoulders, and their faces are entirely covered with black cloth, except two holes for the eyes, which produces the most disagreeable effect;

each carries a torch* of resin. Next follow the priests, in splendid robes of black velvet embroidered in silver; each carries a candle, the sub-priests censors. At intervals the priests repeat short prayers for the repose of the soul; these are delivered in a plaintive recitative, the responses to which are chanted by the choir which follows, and after which come four generals of the same rank as the deceased, bearing on crimson velvet cushions the orders and various badges of their departed friend. To these succeeds the hearse, or open bier, supporting the sarcophagus, and over which is elevated a crimson velvet canopy, fringed with deep gold lace, each corner of which is held by a nobleman of high rank. Then follow the chief mourners, relations, friends, and more distant acquaintances, all in close carriages. The servants and serfs, following on foot, close the procession.

The Greco-Russian church, unlike its rival the Latin, has few of those glittering processions to which the stranger is so accustomed in Roman

* Many explanations are given for this strange custom of burying the dead by torchlight at noonday, but I am indebted to a young student for the supposition that it was a practice transmitted by the early Greek Christians, and borrowed by them from the Romans, as it is well known that they buried their illustrious dead in the forenoon, and it is believed with torches. There can be no doubt that this practice is as old as the introduction of Christianity into Russia.

Catholic countries; therefore these, when they do take place, are extremely imposing. Instead of the round, jolly, substantial Brotherhood of the West, we have here the tall, spare, dignified, ascetic-looking priest, whose solemn air at once arrests the careless gazer, and exacts his attention and respect; there is something grand in the sweep of his long graceful robe; and how much of the Mosaic type in his long beard and flowing locks; and then that countenance at once so expressive of humility, dignity, and the pious quiet of self-possession so befitting his holy calling. It is almost impossible to look at a Russian priest of thirty-five or so without thinking of the beautiful Christ in "The Incredulity of Thomas," and feeling sure that Raphael must have taken one of this body for his model.

After a brief stoppage at the entrance of the church, where the lid of the sarcophagus was removed—sometimes the body remains exposed to view during its *trajet* through the streets—it was then borne by eight friends to the nave of the church, and deposited on a bier covered with velvet. Large candles were then placed all round it, and to each mourner and friend a taper was presented. The candles and tapers being lighted, the service commenced with the 91st Psalm, sung in a low and impressive tone; then a part of the 119th, exquisitely chanted, the whole choir joining

in the Hallelujah chorus; followed by the prayers for the dead. The priests and sub-priests then descend from the chancel, and passing three times round the bier, fumigate with incense, and sprinkle all around with holy water, after which they take their stand among the mourners and join in the following parting hymn—a strain so pathetic and deeply touching that, as it proceeded, every nerve of human sympathy seemed stretched to its utmost tension. Now soaring aloft, it appeared to fill, as with the voices of a heavenly host, the open dome above, and now floating nearer and nearer, to pour the balm of soothing into the sorrow-stricken hearts of the bereaved, which found relief in sobs and low plaintive murmurs:—

“Draw near, my brethren; let us ascribe glory to God, and take our last embrace of our departed brother, who, no longer occupied with the vanities or the cares of life, hath left his kindred, and draweth near unto the tomb.

“May the Lord rest his soul!

“Every profane link with life and its vanities is severed; the spirit hath left its temple; the clay is disfigured; the vessel is broken; we bear unto the tomb a motionless, speechless, senseless corpse.

“May the Lord rest his soul!

“What is life? A flower, a vapour, the dew of the morning. Draw near, then, and let us attentively contemplate the dead! Where is now the graceful form? Where now the sparkling eye?—the rose-tint on the cheek? All, all are withered; like the green herb, they have vanished from our sight. Come, let us fall down with tearful eye before Christ our Saviour.

“What wailing and sorrow, what tears of anguish, when the soul is torn from the body! Hades and the bottomless pit

yawn around. Life is but a passing shadow—a dream of folly, the ungrateful toil of all transitory things.

“Fly, then, from the contamination of the world. Lay hold on heaven. Draw near, brethren, and behold the dust and ashes of which we are made. Whither are we bound? Whence our destiny? Be he poor, or be he rich, master or servant, all, all are but ashes.

“The glory of man passeth away. The flower of youth is gathered by death. All are swallowed up by the grave. All things earthly are but vanity.”

* * * * *

And now, with tottering steps and slow, comes the widow, surrounded by her drooping daughters, bent low in their affliction, and her manly sons, whose eyes, dimmed with tears, rest on the ground as they approach the bier to imprint the last kiss* of affection on the marble brow and bloodless lip of the departed husband and friend. One after the other, a melancholy procession—husbands leading their wives, brothers their sisters, friends and servants following, while those heavenly strains flow on, bearing off the feelings of those less overcome by the burden of present sorrow towards that heaven from whence they seemed to emanate.

What on this earth can possibly compete with the human voice thus trained and attuned? Here the simple burial service of the Greco-Russian Church may be said to terminate. The procession, in the same order as before, repairs to the

* This is called the *Aspasmos*.

church-yard, where the officiating clergyman casts a little earth on the coffin, in the form of a cross, after it has been lowered into the grave, pouring upon it some holy oil, at the same time repeating:—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the round world, and they that dwell therein." To this follows the Doxology and the Benediction, and the assembled friends return to the house of the deceased, where a refreshment awaits them, and where the last duty to the deceased is performed by those who have attended his funeral, in partaking of the *koutië-ya*, or funeral-dish; this is composed of rice, raisins, and honey. Each guest, on entering the house, partook of three spoonfuls of this compound, repeating a short prayer for the repose of the soul of their departed friend.

This ceremonial is evidently a remnant of heathen association transmitted by the Greeks, who also still cling to the popular belief that the departed spirit hovers near the scenes of its former haunts for forty days after its departure from the body, and that it is perfectly conscious of all that takes place.

This reminds me of the popular belief in some parts of Scotland; but the Scotch go farther than the Romans, Russians, or Greeks, in supposing that, while the body remains unburied, the spirit hovers near its late mortal tenement, and that, if

properly summoned, it will even re-enter its late prison-house, and may be made to answer any question put to it as to the cause of its death, &c.

Although the ceremonial of the *koutië-ya* is totally at variance with the simplicity of the Greek and Greco-Russian ritual, and is unsanctioned by these churches, nevertheless its observance is a point of great importance with the Russians, and so sacred is it considered by the lower orders that the epithet of *kouty-venic*, or stealer of the *koutië-ya*, is a term of opprobrium applied only to the very vilest of their kind.

The funerals of the military are very imposing, from the large attendance of soldiers. If an officer of high rank the Emperor* and his sons attend.

This last duty over, we took our leave, and I reached home barely in time to exchange the garb of mourning for one more suited to the gaiety of a Russian dinner-party.

* A little later in the season, I saw the Tzar, one bitter cold day, all covered with the falling snow, following the remains of one of his generals to the grave.

CHAPTER IX.

Dining Out—The Home of a Fashionable Family—Charming Tableau Vivant—An English Fireside Abroad—An Interesting Cockney—Sir Robert Peel's Appreciation of his Native Tongue—Pretty Children—A Russian's Opinion of London—Dinner-table Arrangements—Bill of Fare—Evening Party—The Forfeit—The Musical Law Student—The Traitor.

THE Imperial dinner hour is four o'clock, and although the Court rules the fashion here, as elsewhere, yet there are many who deem this hour "*trop primitive*," and prefer six. While others, having members of their family in Government offices, which close at half-past three or four, are consequently obliged to fall into later arrangements, and dine at five. Among the latter are the de Y—— family; the head of which, having recently been in London, had taken the earliest opportunity, on his return, of gathering around his hospitable board some of his old friends, and those

members of his family who, by marriage or other contingencies, were no longer sojourners under his roof. To this friendly *réunion* I also had the felicity of an invitation. Within a few minutes of the hour named, I find myself borne along the English Quay at railroad speed. At length the equipage draws up before one of those three-storied mansions; light, in exhilarating streams, issues from the long ranges of windows on each floor, for here, in the depth of winter, blinds are seldom drawn down, nor warm curtains so arranged in ample folds across the windows as to exclude every breath of external air, for in a Russian house none can enter by the windows, the inner one being plastered or cemented into its place all round. And down go the steps; the narrow strip of cutting cold is passed; and pushing open the door of a snug portico, the servant led us, through the usual inner half-glazed double-doors, into a luxuriously warm and well-lighted stone hall. Here was stationed a porter, acting conjointly for the families on each floor, and who relieved visitors of their overalls at this point, adding each new arrival to a heterogenous pile of every description of velvet and satin shubas, among which the grey *manteaux militaires* predominated, presenting a grave and potent contrast to the little blue overcoats of the embryo soldiers of the various *corps de cadets*, several of which, with their scarlet

shoulder-stripes, presumed to a close contiguity with their grey superiors on peg and rail.

Up mounted my many-caped guide, till he had cleared two entire flights of stone steps, to a landing where a pair of massive mahogany doors stood invitingly open. Light, music, and the glad voice of youth flowed out through the open portals, while *en passant* one caught, in the brilliantly lighted vista of distant apartments, glimpses of vine-covered trellis, graceful *portière* and curtain, crystal chandelier, the forms of elegantly dressed women, or stragglers of the other sex in uniform; while servants hung about the doors and passages.

But onward passed my guide, up another flight of steps, to the second "flat," where another pair of mahogany doors stopped the way, and about which loitered servants as below. To one of these my guide made over his charge, and now, following another leader, we traversed a spacious *salon* and an equally spacious drawing-room, elegantly furnished and brilliantly lighted, thence into the family sitting-room, an apartment of smaller dimensions, and presenting such a picture of English every-day inner life that, surrounded as it was by so many foreign concomitants—so far from home—it appeared to me like a picture in a panorama, and the figures moved and spoke ere I could fairly realize it.

A trellis screen, covered by the beautiful Dutch vine, interspersed with the bright yellow star-shaped blossoms of a Crimean creeping plant, formed a bower-like entrance into this *recherché* family sanctum. Rather towards a corner luxuriously lined with chintz-covered settees, stood a round table, dominated by a French lamp, the light from which, radiating through the *couleur de rose* folds of a finely-cut lamp-paper, threw a soft glowing tint over a variety of bagatelle elegancies scattered around, such as coloured silks, drawing-materials, a vase of flowers, an English-made telescope, reading-screen, &c.

Behind this screen sat a portly, handsome woman, with the presence of an empress, and the features of a Roman matron; her luxuriant black hair, uncovered by cap or kerchief, simply braided and coiled round her well-formed head, that head bending gracefully over her busy fingers, which were engaged at a large bundle of scarlet wool, that turned out to be a sledge netting* for her black horses. Opposite to this lady sat two very pretty girls, one, a younger edition of herself, and apparently about twenty, engaged in copying

* These sledge nettings, which are also very ornamental, are thrown over the backs of the horses and attached by one side to the sledge, to prevent the loose pieces of ice or balls of snow, which are occasionally thrown up by the hind feet of the animals, from entering the vehicle.

a light pencil-drawing; and the other, a pale beauty of seventeen or so, stooping over a small embroidery frame containing a roll of canvas about two and a-half inches wide, over the unfinished portion of which her needle plied in busy haste, for the beautiful piece of embroidery was intended as a pair of reins for her military and favourite brother, as a present for his approaching "name's day." This brother, a handsome youth, wearing the distinguished uniform of the Chevalier Garde, sat by her side, rocking backwards and forwards upon the edge of his chair, his guardsman's heels resting, at the full stretch of his long legs, upon a pair of marvellously long gilt spurs, with the rowels of which he appeared endeavouring to make a breach through the Axminster carpet that covered the apartment.

A bright coal fire glowed in an English fireplace, which was replete with all the usual concomitants, even to the marble shelf and Ormolu timepiece. Nor was this Anglo-Russian fireside wanting in that other attribute to which an Englishwoman is almost as much accustomed as to the poker and tongs; for, standing before the rosy fire, as Englishmen are wont to do, with a coat-tail hanging comically over each arm, was the master of the house, the very beau-ideal of "a fine Old English Gentleman, one of the olden time;" a tall manly specimen of humanity, slightly bald,

and very grey, with a pleasant red face, every wrinkle and line of which betokened openness and hilarity. Advancing towards his English guest with out-stretched, open, warmly-grasping palm,—which, in the exuberance of its vice-like shake, expressed the plenitude of its owner's hospitality—he kindly bade me welcome. How much he had to tell me of his impressions of London, of his disgust on a first acquaintance with our “old Father Thames,” and of the mean-looking buildings on its banks, but of his surprise at the multitudinous shipping, which he described to his hearers as resembling a forest of fir-trees without the branches; how amusingly he told the story of his rising at noon on the day after his arrival in London, having remained in bed many hours after his usual time of getting up, waiting patiently until the sun should rise—it was the early part of November, and one of the densest of our famous fogs—and, after all, was obliged to dress and spend the remainder of the day by means of artificial light; and how, days after, when the sun did make his appearance, he spent several mornings walking up and down Cheapside, watching with extreme surprise the perpetually flowing streams of people and vehicles which passed and repassed; of the extraordinary contrasts he met with in the English capital; of the wealth and poverty, comfort and squalor, refinement and vulgarity;

of the different shades of English spoken by the different classes; and of the different religions, for every church he entered, though he was told they were all English, yet they were all different. He admired exceedingly the prompt manner in which business matters were transacted; the benevolence of the wealthy, the prosperity of the trading-classes, and the independent intelligence of all. He appeared charmed with Edinburgh, and enchanted with Dublin, and, above all, with those Irish to whom he had been introduced; their graciousness and hospitality to himself he said he "should never forget;" nor was the little cockney companion of his return voyage home forgotten, for in the person of Sir Robêrte Peel, the superb spaniel before-mentioned, I was introduced to a compatriot that had been purchased in Regent Street. Sir Robêrte, barely recognising his own noble name thus accented, scarcely raised his head from its luxurious resting-place, although the expression of his large round eyes, and the deprecatory wag of his feathery tail, sufficiently testified his sense of the fact that his good looks were the subject of conversation, those eyes looking first at one speaker, then at another, with that vague expression of helplessness often depicted in human countenances when addressed in a language entirely unknown. Finding that he could make nothing of the conversation, which

was in French, Sir Robert drew in his pug among his silken curls, and with a deep sigh, evoked perhaps by some cherished souvenir of his English home—who knows?—resigned himself to his luxurious fate.

And here three fairy sprites, the granddaughters of Mr. de Y——, came tripping through the leafy bower, charming little black-eyed things; they had an English nurse, spoke English, and were always dressed, *à l'Anglaise*, in very short frocks, and little white socks, and sash bows, like monster peony roses. The little creatures approached grandpapa and grandmamma in succession, kissing the hand of each, when grandpapa, raising them in the same succession off their little fat legs, swung them up to the altitude of his lips, and kissing each, he set them carefully down again; while grandmamma stooped down, and enframing each chubby face as it presented itself within her plump white hands, imprinted a kiss on the rosy lips, muttering a blessing as she did so.

Here I met a very charming couple, M. and Madame de T ove, the lady graceful and accomplished, with an inexpressible fascination of manner; the gentleman ugly as Socrates, and about as learned and amiable; this was a genuine Russian couple, as the name* implied. Both she

* Nearly all purely Russian names terminate in *off*, *eff*, or *ove*, *sky*, and *in*.

and her husband addressed me in English, which they spoke fluently, and quite free from that nasal, guttural, and accented pronunciation which betrays most foreigners, even after a long residence in our country. But the Russians are probably the best linguists in the world, their own sonorous, flowing, graceful tongue familiarizing them from infancy with the use of every known sound, the combination of the "th" perhaps excepted, but which they easily overcome. Madame de T ove had been recently staying for some time in London, and a theme so suggestive evoked a long and interesting conversation, in the course of which several well-known local names were mentioned. At sounds so familiar, Sir Robert Peel pricked up his ears, started to his feet, and bounding out of his cushion into my lap, planted a paw on each shoulder, and proceeded to testify his delight at this unexpected *rencontre* with a compatriot in a manner more affectionate than agreeable, until, his excitement having somewhat subsided, he curled himself up at my side, from which position no entreaty could decoy him, every now and then looking up wistfully in my face as I dropped the tongue of his Fatherland for that which was in more general use.

Numerous guests having arrived, our hostess and her daughters laid aside their various occupations, and repaired to the drawing-room to receive

them, while Mr. de Y——, who still occupied his post before the fire—greatly to the annoyance of his wife, who expressed herself as being perfectly shocked at this newly-imported English mode of comporting himself—entertained a party of gentlemen who stood laughing and talking around him.

Two servants now entered, bearing silver trays laden with bread-and-butter, radishes, sardines, Gruyère cheese, and “sweet vodka”—a cordial made of sirup, flavoured with caraway or aniseed, to which rye-whisky is added—the one pink, the other white. This was the *avant courier* of dinner, of which all partook, by way of whetting the appetite for the attack in perspective. This ceremony is in all probability another of the many Greek customs* still in use in Russia.

The gentlemen being directed to partners, the guests paired off to the dining-room, a spacious apartment, and lighted in a manner as unique as agreeable. The entire room, except the table, was enveloped in a soft green twilight, while the table and guests were thrown out into brighter, though still soft, relief by a flood of light emanating from a row of lamps suspended immediately over it, and which were shaded from above by

* The ancient Greeks and Romans presented wine to their guests during the tedious half-hour before dinner. The same custom prevails in China at the present day.

semi-transparent green shades. The table was arranged for dessert somewhat after the fashion used at English tables, but with much more taste. Classic-looking dessert-mounts of Sevres china, containing natural flowers, rose here and there above others of the same kind, but differing in shape, supporting bunches of Crimean grapes, that drooped over the edges of the elegant ornaments, and from amidst which peeped the delicate pink cheeks of the beautiful apples from Crim. These were surrounded by others, less elevated, containing preserved pines, peaches, apricots, &c., retaining their colour and flavour almost *au naturel*. Many of these are used in the course of dinner with various dishes. Nothing can exceed the elegance of this arrangement; every dish of which the dinner is composed is then handed singly, having previously been carved by a servant, either in the kitchen or in an adjoining apartment. With every dish comes a hot change of plate; where sauce is an adjunct to any particular dish, it is handed immediately after that dish. The Russians are deservedly popular for their perfection in the science of dining properly; but all honour be to those to whom it is due; the *onus* of a dinner devolves almost exclusively on the cook and the waiters, and, even in a small family, of moderate means, the lady of the house has no care, from day to day, how she is to dine on the next. She

allows an average sum for each member of her family per head, and for the rest she has no more trouble than if she were at a *table d'hôte*. The dinner is sure to be well chosen; every dish, though differing, yet assimilates, or rather, does not jar with the other, and is served with a delicacy that might satisfy the most fastidious. There is none of that fearful waste, either, that is unfortunately the case in the English *cuisine*. A dinner in St. Petersburg can be put on the table for one-fourth the cost of one in London, for the same number and rank of guests, and yet look much more bountiful, twenty times more elegant, and a hundred per cent. more comfortable.* A simple cauliflower, served up with sweet sauce as they have it here, is an elegant-looking and delicious comestible, and one prized—as a light dish—by the gourmand. The Russian cooks seem to learn cooking intuitively; they pick it up from one another, for a footman in a family often turns cook, simply from watching and helping his fellow-servant. A Russian waiter is inimitable; he moves about like a shadow, and is always at your elbow at the very moment he is wanted.

* This is the case throughout Russia. In the far interior, the dinner arrangements are just as complete as in the capitals. In the houses of tradesmen, barring the dessert and elegant service, dinner is served in the same way, one dish handed at a time, and the composition of the dishes equally good.

The English, particularly, might learn a few valuable lessons in comfort, economy, and elegance from the Russian cooks and waiters, however humiliating to their *amour propre* to be told it; nevertheless "'tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis, 'tis true."

The first dish presented—and which was handed on the most approved plan, with a napkin wrapped round the hand—was the national "borsh-schie," accompanied by patties of minced meat, and immediately succeeded by a servant bearing a large bowl of sour* cream, of which every one partook, putting a spoonful or two of it into their soup. This borsh-schie is a super-excellent soup; it is made of several kinds of meat, such as beef, veal, and chickens, boiled together, with sour white cabbage; beet-root is sometimes added, but always sour cream, which thickens it agreeably.

Then followed another dish, also national—the

* This also is of Greek origin. Sour cream enters largely into the preparations of the Russian *cuisine*; fish is fried in it, game roasted in it, salad prepared with it, soups thickened with it. Another dish of the same kind is, "smetan," or new milk, which, after standing long enough for the cream to rise, is then artificially soured. It is regularly prepared daily during the summer in every large establishment; is usually iced, and eaten with sifted sugar, and certainly no condiment can possibly be more refreshing on a melting warm day. It is an antiscorbutic. This is a favourite dish with the Circassians, who call it "youg-hourt." The modern Greeks make it of cream.

renowned "blinnie," a kind of crumpet, but whiter and thinner, a pancake which no foreign cook can accomplish correctly. These are eaten thickly overspread with fresh caviare, or oiled butter. Then came a native fish, resembling in appearance a fine trout, but of immense size, smothered in white sauce, capers, and truffles, and ornamented with stars and crescents cut in carrots and turnips. And next, a pair of turkey-poults, boiled and cut up, but retaining their natural form, and stuck all over with silver arrows, upon which were strung mushrooms and sausages cut in small round slices, the whole covered with white sauce; then followed green peas and French beans, preserved, *à la Russe*, fresh and green. And after these a couple of tongues cut in thick slices. And now, frying and frizzling as it approaches, comes a silver saucepan full of something like golden-tinted rissoles, but which turn out to be potatoes fried German fashion. Then appeared a brace of grouse roasted in sour cream, and served with the national accompaniment of "brusnic"—a delicious bitter-sweet preserve made of an early kind of cranberry—and the universal salt cucumber. Iced pudding and cream ice next made the line of one side of the table, for each dish just described had its duplicate, so that the party—nearly twenty—were almost simultaneously helped. This was by no means a dinner of

ceremony, indeed it differed little from the ordinary daily meal but in the number of sweets presented after the pudding, which were positively endless in detail, though partaken of by few.

Wines of all kinds, principally French and Rhine wines, and the so-called English wines, viz. Port and Sherry, were there in profusion, and even Barclay's London porter, which here enjoys a high reputation.

A Russian dinner is in every respect inimitable. The various dishes are well selected, light, nutritious, and cooked to perfection. Served quietly and expeditiously, and however large the party, without the least trouble to the host and hostess, who are thus enabled to entertain their guests in the most refined manner, by giving them their undivided attention, unimpeded by that anxiety always in the heart, and often expressed on the countenance, of the dinner-presiding *materfamilias* *chez-nous*. Here, nothing distinguishes the mistress of the house from her guests, but that she is first helped. How often, while admiring the graceful ease of a pretty Russian lady thus presiding — a charming picture, seen through the long vista of variegated flowers, leaves, and richly-tinted fruit which adorn the long table—an “odious comparison” would intrude itself, in the vision of a little round *materfamilias* in the same

place, with her upper face—and that very red—barely visible above the carcass of a full-crammed turkey, while her little round hands play about as if they were making yeast dumplings on the top of it. An army of mutes in clerical guise, each armed with an expectant plate, and with the vulgar calm of indifference, encircle her. And then the awkward voyage of the great gaunt bird on his huge platter, when a gentleman at her side, pitying the poor lady's "labour of love," seizes the "small arms" with one hand, and with the other scrambles all subordinate objects out of the way of the coming leviathan, and, with arms a-kimbo, begins the business of dissection. There are none of these awkward concomitants at a Russian dinner-table. Cooking, waiting, and, I may add, carving, are reduced to a studied art. Dinner *réunions* are consequently a pleasure both to the host and to the recipient of his hospitality, and seem to be regarded by both as one of the natural elements revolving in the ordinary course of things, like the air we breathe. While with us—but it is unnecessary to enter into details. Every middle class *materfamilias* belonging to a dinner-giving husband knows full well the mountain of anxiety by which she is oppressed for several days prior to that momentous *one*; and her greatest trial often commences after the last guest has departed, the "awkward

squad" been dismissed, the last light but one extinguished, when the awful curtain lecture begins, the text chosen being, "I tell you the saddle of mutton was raw, so that none could eat, and that splendid pea-fowl was done to rags."

Our repast ended, the guests rose, crossed themselves, muttered their thank-offering, and, approaching the lady of the house, bowed, her children kissing her hand. This pretty custom is universal, and, with several others of the same kind, tends to keep up a feeling of gratitude and respect, both to God and man, which is nowhere seen in greater practical force than in Russia.

This ceremony over, every cavalier offered his arm to his dinner partner, and reconducted her to the drawing-room, that barbaric remnant of Saxon heathenism, the after-dinner orgie, not being in vogue here. The gentlemen are however permitted to smoke their cigarettes with their coffee in the drawing-room, which, far from being disagreeable, becomes, even to non-smokers and ladies, almost a necessity after a time. The tobacco smoked by the Russians is so delicate as to be almost a perfume; in short there is as great a difference in the quality of this luxury here and in England, as there is in the tea and champagne. Smoking in the streets is not permitted in any part of Russia; therefore some extension of latitude is necessary in this respect in-doors. To speak truly, the

Russian gentlemen take no undue advantage of the universal privilege allowed them, and which, notwithstanding that it is universal, they seldom indulge in without asking permission of all ladies present.

After coffee, several games were introduced; such as loto, dominoes, and puzzles of different kinds, in which the children and younger members of the party joined; bonbons, grapes, apples, &c. being the stake for which they played. Some walked up and down the long suite of rooms, or loitered near the piano in the *salon*, where Miss de Y—— charmed all listeners by her artistic performance; others lounged on couch or settee, engaged in *causeries amicales*, when a servant entered, carrying in a glass dish a very beautiful pyramidal-shaped something of the trifle tribe of *bonnes bouches*, here called “*peroje-nia*,” which with a small plate and a spoon were handed to each guest. Veritable ambrosia, the recipe for making which I begged for an Oxonian friend, a famous concoctor of “nectar” and “Sherry cobbler,” and here it is:—

Soak a quantity of Savoy biscuits in very thick hot cream, into which, when cold, drop slices of pine-apple, apricot, peach, dried cherries, and any other preserved fruits, *ad libitum*. Cover the whole with whipped cream, into which drop bunches of preserved red currants, stars and

crescents of melon, walnuts, and sweet almonds, blanched and chopped, and pop the whole into the ice-cellar for an hour. For English tastes this would be greatly improved by the addition of a small quantity of Marischino or Curaçoa, or both.

Before eight o'clock, most of the dinner guests had taken leave, as it is not the custom to stay for tea, unless particularly requested. Some went off to the opera, others to evening or card parties, or later *réunions* or balls. And I hurried home, for it was the first of the series of these weekly *sans cérémonie* parties, which are common on the Continent, and which render visiting so agreeable, because so easy.

As I entered, a handsome militaire,* six feet high without his boots, was now upon his knees on the floor, and with a handkerchief thrown over his head and face, he knelt before a little girl of seven or eight, who, holding aloft a handsome amulet, demanded what penalty was to be inflicted on the owner of that "pretty thing." Well did the gay kneeler know by the rattle of its golden links to whom it belonged, and he resolved to "serve out" its mischievous owner, between whom and himself there had existed from childhood an interminable amicable misunderstanding,

* One of the first who fell at the Siege of Silistria.

a wordy feud which now took the character of a *jeu d'esprit*. He knew moreover his cousin's keen sense of the ridiculous, and, like a skilful tactician, attacked his pretty foe on her weakest point, demurely ordaining that the owner of the forfeit in question, "if a lady," should repeat twelve times over, as fast as possible, the following epistrophe—a Russian "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper" sleight-of-tongue feat, in which a papa or priest is the hero, and which is much more difficult for a Russian tongue to pronounce than for an English one. It is as follows:

"Gaverileé tree papá,
Prâ, prâ, coffee-yâ papa,
Prâ, prâ coffee-yâ-vaycha Papa."

For every *lapsus linguæ* the speaker was to forfeit three hairs, plucked by her own hand from the bump of benevolence on her crown, which treasure was to be drawn for by the tallest and the shortest gentleman in the room—he being the tallest, and a youthful cavalry cadet the shortest.

Loud and prolonged was the merriment when Eudoxie coyly advanced to claim the bracelet, and renewed shouts hailed every mistake. Exacting as a very Shylock was the waggish inflicter, greedily collecting every auburn thread, as another and another swelled the golden gathering, into a shining ringlet. And now came the drawing for the prize; for a moment the noisy clamour sub-

sided, and again it burst forth with uproarious acclamations when it was announced that the general favourite, the "tallest" there, was the happy claimant. This finished the forfeits, and to noise and fun the most perfect silence succeeded.

There were present two very accomplished brothers, one a captain in the Brèobréjensky Garde, and the other a law student, wearing a uniform half military, half civilian. The younger, the law student, sat at the pianoforte, a sword dangled at his side, his cocked hat lay on the floor, while his head slowly undulated from side to side, *à l'artiste*, to the divine harmony of Beethoven's Adelaïde, which he rendered with the most sublime effect. Not the slightest whisper broke the attentive silence of the party, for the Russians, young and old, high and low, are passionately fond of music.

As, amid the galaxy of professional life, there are luminaries of brighter lustre than others, so the circle of amateurs here has its "bright peculiar stars," and one of the most brilliant of these is the young Alexis de P——, the law student. In music he may be said "to live, and move, and have his being," and he detests his profession as heartily as it is possible for his gentle nature to do. In connection with such a character, the cocked hat and sword seemed as much out of

place, as they were emblems opposed to his peaceful calling; unless, indeed, like the little wooden men, with little wooden swords, which one sees sometimes on the top of a weathercock, always fighting, or threatening to fight, the wind, it may be supposed emblematical of the never-ending strife provoked by the law. And there sat this palefaced youth, so completely absorbed in the *délices* of his art—so far above all sublunary considerations—that it was by no means remarkable that the sonorous announcement of “Chië gotov,” or, tea is ready, met with no response from him, at least, and that long after we, the grosser humanities of this earthly state of probation, had repaired to sip tea and imbibe smoke, he still pursued his reverie through the most plaintive, intricate, and soul-stirring *detours*. Such geniuses are the links of the material with the spiritual, and in such rhapsodies must assuredly experience a foretaste of heaven.

Among other strangers I had seen for the first time this evening, one was an anomaly—an Englishman who abused his country in the fiercest terms. He told me in French that he had studiously avoided speaking English for the last thirty years, and that he would not permit his children to learn the “detestable language!” He had even Germanised his name. He was a fine-looking old man, with the Great Duke of Wellington style of

face, and wore the uniform of a general officer. As I regarded him with surprise, I wondered if a man, so faithless to his own Fatherland, could prove true to that which he had adopted, or if he had been most "sinned against, or sinning," for in nine cases out of ten, where a man abuses his native land, he has been the first to wrong her. "*Chi t'ha offeso non ti perdona mai.*"

CHAPTER X.

Conservatism of the Peterburghers—Merchants and Marchands
 —The Higgling System — Commercial Ball — English
 Egotism and Russian Hauteur—Young Russia and Young
 America—Native Society in St. Petersburg—Elegance of
 Entertainments—St. Catherine's Day—Russian Opera—
 Adaptation of the Russian Language to Song.

FAST enchained within their ice-bound barrier, the *habitués* of St. Petersburg, like birds of passage after summer wanderings, settle down for the snow season in their winter-quarters, awaiting only the arrival of the Imperial family to deliver themselves up to the *convenances* of society as here established, the chief end and aim of which is gaiety and amusement.

In a city so essentially military as is St. Petersburg, it may naturally be supposed that a highly conservative tone prevails. Those who know any-

thing of the exclusive circle of our naval seaports—where money, even all-powerful money, cowers before rank—will readily understand the state of society in this Northern capital. A poor man,* possessing barely sufficient of the “needful” to keep “the wolf from the door,” may hold a rank that gives him the privilege of *entrée* to the Imperial *salons*—and consequently to every other—to the exclusion of the rankless *négociant* worth his millions. This competition for rank is as the pointer to the polar star of every Russian's existence; for even the ignoble may enter the lists and rise to influence through superior merit, earned by service to the crown, while, now, nobility cannot be purchased.

Those conversant with the life of a half-pay British officer having no private means independent of his pay—with that hard silent struggle to eke out his meagre income to meet the exactions of the circle in which his profession places him—with that sickening competition of a £100 per annum with £10,000—that contest, in short, of well-educated starving poverty with luxurious, extravagant wealth—may read at a glance the condition of society in St. Petersburg, and can

* I have known more than one such, whose unavoidable debts the Emperor Nicholas paid out of his private purse, and with such considerate delicacy that the recipients of his munificence could only guess who had thus befriended them.

imagine what influences are rifest in a city numbering between 500,000 and 600,000 inhabitants, all, even to the serfs, imbued with the vital importance of rank, and keenly alive to "making an appearance." These latter pride themselves on the position of their masters, or employers, as if it was their own; but this could scarcely be otherwise, for rank here has so many distinctions, that, like the graphic sign-boards, all that run may read who and what you are as you pass them in the streets.

This conservatism regards the *négociant* and the trader as nearly on a par with the serf, as very good people in their way, doubtless, and necessary to society at large, but no associate for it; hence the strict line of demarcation between the Russian nobility and the foreign residents, who, with few exceptions, are engaged in trade; and hence the principal reason that we know very little of the real character and sentiments of the middle and higher classes of Russians.

Trade pays a high tax here; it is true that its interests are protected by Russian laws for this; but an English gentleman winces at the humiliation of submitting to certain restrictions, which, though in themselves trivial enough, become important by the very restriction. For instance, a British merchant, however wealthy, may not drive more than a pair of horses, he

must not put his servants in livery, nor can he own land,* &c.

The generality of foreign merchants become Russian citizens for the sake of protection to their trade, and thus place themselves on a par with native subjects of the same grade, of course submitting to the restrictions imposed upon them, and at the same time enjoying their immunities. Thus, some of our compatriots take the oaths of fealty to the reigning Emperor as Finnish subjects, others as Novogorodians, Muscovites, Peterburghers, &c. Few—and many make large fortunes in Russia—who have spent the best of their lives as Russian merchants and citizens, care to spend the evening of their lives in the country where they have hived their wealth, but buy off themselves and their families, and remove with their riches to other lands, in most cases leaving a son, brother, or other representative, to carry on the business on their own account, till they in turn do the same thing.

Most Russians of rank appear to regard trade as a legitimate kind of imposition, where every dealer tries to get as much as he can over and above the fair value of the article he vends, and the purchaser in return beats him down to a price proportionably below it. Thus, until within the

* There are, however, exceptions even to this general rule.

last few years, a system tantamount to the higgling still fashionable in Scotch and French fish-markets, was universal in Russia; but an inroad has been effected on this pernicious custom by the tradesmen themselves, who are beginning to find their own level in the social scale, and to do away with a usage not originally theirs, but probably induced by the ignorance or distrust of their customers; therefore, it is common now in St. Petersburg, as in other great cities of the continent, to see *prix fixe* on the shop-windows, or to be told the same on attempting to "beat down."

There are, however, a few intelligent Russians of both sexes, who, having had the courage to break through the barrier *chevaux-de-frise* which encircles the "upper ten thousand"—of which body they form progressive and liberal members—cultivate acquaintance with the foreign residents, the British particularly, and duly appreciate their many estimable qualities; having doubtless made the important discovery that, in the *legitimate* pursuit of trade *on honourable principles*, there is nothing incompatible with the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of those high intellectual refinements which must always secure to educated intelligence the fraternity of fellow-minds, whatever may be the "caste" to which their bodies belong; and that far from following

their avocations merely for the accumulation of money, vile—but necessary—money, for its own sake, it is as a means only; and further, that if we British, as a nation, seek to propitiate the deity of wealth, our's is not a blind and fanatical, but a qualified and enlightened, worship.

Now “that the ice is broken,” it is to be hoped that this exclusiveness on the part of the Russian gentry may be propitiated by the British, to the advantage of both parties. The gay of both nations are now thrown together, at least once a year, at a *distinguè* ball given by the younger scions of the British merchant residents, and this “commercial ball” affords the young Russian ladies great pleasure; they speak in the highest terms of the arrangements, and anticipate its annual return with delight. Our national *hauteur* and egotism, however, too often interfere with many things, to our loss even at home, and often keep both parties aloof here, for the Russians are a sensitive people, and, when needs be, can wield a *hauteur* even more repulsive than our own, and which is but too often justly evoked by the blunt and inconsiderate expressions made use of towards them by the foreigners who eat their bread. In this respect, the Americans have a great advantage over us in making their way about the world, and in Russia, in particular, their courtesy gains them many friends, and it is quite

easy to perceive that they are very popular in that country.

A Russian nobleman with whom I am sufficiently acquainted to pass a joke, a man of great shrewdness and high attainments, in comparing the British and Americans, remarked:—"Ah! they"—alluding to the latter—"are the people for us; they possess all that we admire in the English, without that unapproachable hauteur, that impenetrable barrier with which you surround yourselves;" he continued, turning to me and laughing, "and which, hereafter, I propose riding over, for it takes too much time to break through," at the same time rapping his spurs together, and making the military salute.

But it is true; we are haughty, egotistically haughty, and walk abroad as if "all the earth was our's, and the fulness thereof." The Americans certainly comprehend the Russians better than we do; they know more of them, and a lively sympathy exists between them. This may be traced to many causes—for there is much in common—and not the least prominent one perhaps may be found in the physical similarity of their climates, and the internal habits and necessities induced thereby; as well as by the magnitude of their respective geographical possessions. Both young, fresh and vigorous in body and mind, unprejudiced, and unshackled by conformity to pre-

cedent, the acquired acuteness of the one may be said to be an inherent ingredient in the character of the other. Extravagant in their tastes and habits to an unprecedented degree, both seem equally desirous of outstripping the old nationalities of the world; these young "go-aheads" never look back, and a remarkable feature common to both—the chief attribute of hopeful youth—is, that in conversation they rarely allude to the past; while we, with that habit peculiar to age, sit brooding over the relics of time, gone never more to return, they stride on, on, on, with every sense and muscle at work, growing in knowledge, and power, and wealth as they go. The Russians fully appreciate the liberality, astuteness, and talent of our Transatlantic relative; besides which, the American is more *degagé* than the Englishman, without being inferior to him in the graver pursuits and attainments of life, he *acts the Frenchman better*, and this is a universal *passe-partout* here.

Thus, with a few isolated exceptions, the society of the northern city is restricted almost entirely to its own native population, one of Greek, Italian, Swiss, French, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, German, Tartar, Armenian, Circassian, Polish, Prussian, Cossack, English, Scotch, Irish, and Russian origin, which ingredients have, since the days of its foundation, been

gradually incorporating their various elements into a system peculiar to this frontier city, and to the almost entire absorption of the native character, so that Petersburg may be said to be more French or German, or more anything else than Russian; the Fins and the Germans of the Russo-German provinces alone retaining their respective characteristics. As the various colours on a painter's palette, when ground separately, present to the eye an individual character, and when mixed together compose an expressionless something difficult to define, so it is here; no national element is particularly conspicuous. The customs, usages, and languages of Western Europe are so much in force, that a stranger is often bewildered on first entering society; what he takes at first sight to be Russian turns out, after a nearer acquaintance, to be French, or Italian, or Greek, or something else, and what he mistook for something else turns out to be Russian, or a remnant of Russianism.

The greatest anomalies exist; one meets with Peterburgher great ladies, calling themselves *patriotic*, who speak French, Italian, German, and English fluently, but who know nothing whatever of their superb mother tongue; while, on the other hand, there are strangers who speak Russ, German, and French, to the entire oblivion of their own language.

Through all, and over all, reigns an air of adaptation from Western Europe, which, by the very concentration of variety, forms novelty, and greatly aids in rendering the *réunions* of St. Petersburg the most elegant and brilliant in the world.

Fast day and feast, feast day and fast, such are the usual changes rung out all over the Continent of Europe most of the year round; but in this particular part of it, the one seems to be kept with more fervour, and the other with more devotion.

This is St. Catherine's day. It is ring, ring, ring all day, for our Countess is a Catherine; her levee is a full one; and gingling spurs, and rich and varied uniforms, salutes, moustaches, smiles, white teeth, flashing eyes, and *mots d'esprit* are the principal impressions of the morning of St. Catherine's day, which terminated in a visit to the Russian theatre.

Here, at length, was something quite new, purely Russian. Russian Opera, with its full flowing musical sounds; native *artistes*, native assistants, all were Russian; and interesting indeed was the sight of that acre of *parterre*, thickly studded with Grecian-like sages in long beards and flowing caftans, immovable and silent as statues, but drinking in with the deepest attention every sound of the delicious opera, "La Fille

du Régiment." Here was a real Russian Sontag—the charming Mademoiselle Samoiloff, whose refinement of acting, and perfection of voice, awoke every sympathy of her delighted audience, filling with tears the eyes of many who had listened a hundred times to the “stars” of the west unmoved.

The Russian language is particularly adapted to song, its thirteen vowels softening some of its harsher consonants down to the most poetic harmony. The generality of words, moreover, end in vowels, thus rendering them capable of most diastaltic modulation. But while the sounds of the Russian language raise it to the highest position as the vehicle of song, giving its possessors, in depth, softness, and sonorousness of expression, advantages even over the Italians themselves, the construction of the language presents features diametrically opposed; its Latin-like laconisms affording the most inimitable media for the conveyance of satire and comedy. In these two prominent features of their language, we have a key to the native character, for no nation is more susceptible of strong, deep passions, yet sensitive in the keenest degree to ridicule.

CHAPTER XI.

Commencement of "the Season"—Influx of Invitations—
 —Shopping Excursion—Impromptu Masquerade—The
 Clever Wife—A Brace of Bears—Impromptu Supper—
 A Russian Idea of Englishmen Wine-Drinkers—"Queen
 Victoria of England"—Boja Tzara Chranie—Les Dames
 Anglaises—The Sham Englishman—A Sham "Speech"—
 Dance of the Queens.

WITH the return of the Imperial family, St. Petersburg may be said to cast off the last trammel of her summer trance, and to rise up from the inertness of inaction to all the rivalry, intrigue, and intoxicating gaiety of her winter life—a season of hilarity, when dull care, with all its long-faced, woe-begone attendants is banished, and Comus and Momus, and every patron deity of mirth, smile, and merry hearts reign supreme.

In short, "the season" has commenced, as every white-kid glove manufacturer, every ice and

bonbon confectioner, every rout purveyor and vendor of costly luxuries, knows full well; and, notwithstanding that the mercury tells a freezing tale this bright morning, everybody looks happy, obliging, and pleased. It is the beginning of Mammon's harvest-time, and the expectant spirit sparkles in the eyes of every Koupitza—buyer and seller—twinkling bright as the frozen atmospheric atoms that float like diamond cuttings through the air he breathes.

The four black horses have been ordered, and my friends are the occupants of a large sledge, with faces buried in their muffs, for the cold makes the eyes water and cheeks tingle; large patches of ice take possession of each veil just opposite the mouth; the coachman's beard is covered with frost like silver filigree, and the horses' manes and tails, nostrils and fetlocks, are the same, and the bearskin sledge-cover, and the fur collars of the ladies' cloaks, are all sparkling brilliantly in the cold bright sun, as they drive full speed to the *recherchés magasins* in the principal street, each armed with a list, half-a-yard long, of bagatelle wants for the approaching gaieties.

Now invitations come pouring in. There is a ball and private theatricals at Madame C——'s; the concert of young Wieneiffsky—a Polish musical star of the first magnitude—at General

V——'s ; a ball at the family doctor's ; a birthday dinner-party and ball at the house of one of the senators, besides the opera, theatres, and general reception evenings of a pretty wide circle of friends. To get through this formidable list, extending at farthest over three or four days—several falling on the same—required some little consideration of physical ability, as well as of costume ; as, for example, we take the concert of young Wieneiffsky, the German dinner-party, and the Polish doctor's ball on the same evening, and all situated widely apart.

This was to be the order of things, not for a solitary evening, or even week, but for the whole winter through, Sunday and all ! “So,” said my friends, “you had better make up your mind to it at once.” And so I did, resolving, during my residence among these courteous, hospitable strangers, to do as they did, provided that such should in nowise interfere with established principles of religion and morality ; and to test the strength of this new-made resolve, I put it in force that very night.

At four o'clock we received invitations for a fancy-dress impromptu ball, to commence at eight. A few minutes after that hour we drew up at the entrance of a mansion, situated on the broad Letainoë, from whose extensive range of double-glazed windows on the first floor, the light

streamed across the snow-beaten road in lively beams, illuminating in its transit the double tier of single sledges, four-horse family coaches, smart broughams, and tottering hacks which stood beneath in compact order, within easy call. Entering by a porticoed doorway and spacious light, warm stone hall, we ascended, proceeding from the usual vestibule into a large *salon* replete with light, warmth, music, and perfume. Defiling in and out through a motley and elegant crowd, some polking, others waltzing, and many disposed in groups round the various doorways opening into the *salon*, we made our way towards the charming mistress of the house, for that evening a splendidly-attired Marie Antoinette, in velvet diamonds and point-lace, who stood, a perfect blaze of beauty, leaning on a marble pedestal which supported a Jupiter-like bust of the magnificent Tzar.

Marie Antoinette received us with all the dignity and grace of her high estate, most graciously bidding us welcome, and, what was something from a queen, condescendingly informing us that our fancy costumes were charming. Her Majesty further told us that her husband having been *ennuyé* all the morning, she had suddenly thought of this *divertissement*. "And how well it has succeeded, you may judge by his happy looks; there he goes," she added, and, following

the direction indicated by a slight inclination of one of the prettiest hands in the world, we beheld a tall, spare, military, moustached, wizard-looking being, in a flowing robe of black velvet, studded all over with silver hieroglyphics, and surmounted by a high conical black cap, ornamented at the apex by a silver crescent. He was flying along at the fleetest speed of the galop, the heavy robe flaunting "about and about," now displaying the rich uniform of a Hussar underneath, and now enveloping the fragile form of the little Swiss-costumed maiden whom he bore onward. If happiness can be judged of by externals, then was the wizard-husband of the bewitching queen supremely happy, for he laughed and talked, and glided along, nodding to her *en passant*; now doing the amiable to his little partner, or—for he was master of the ceremonies—regulating the changes in the music at the top of his voice; now it was slow and heavy, now the wildest *prestissimo*.

Marie Antoinette still rested on the pedestal, her beaming countenance refulgent in its plenitude of beauty and satisfaction at her own good management, and probably thinking it a fitting occasion to read a lecture to the unsophisticated trio before her, she thus addressed them:—

"Let me beg of you, ladies, to take example by me. Remember that no stream runs smoother than

that of married life where the wife knows her duty; for if she has tact, she will always lead; and if her husband is a wise man, he will always follow. For instance, if Paul had had some wives, he might have yawned himself to death, whereas he is now amused. He thinks I am the best wife in the universe, and this surprise which I have made for him—here she lowered her voice—affords me the pleasure of opening my *salons*, among the first of the season, to a most agreeable society, who I hope will enjoy my impromptu dance, which they have done me the honour to attend;” concluding this matronly oration with a graceful inclination of her diamond-decked head and white-gloved hand.

Sophie Alexandraïvena was doubtless a very clever woman, though her ideas of duty, and those of her unsophisticated hearers, differed, I suspect, rather considerably.

“Valse à deux temps,” shouted the wizard, and the outburst of one of Gung’s choicest dance-melodies set willing feet to work, and the most diversified circle of whirling couples passed in review before us, reminding me somewhat of the heathen poet—

“More leaves the forest yields not from the trees,
More beasts the Alps breed not, nor Hybla bees,
Than there he fashions of attire in view,
For each succeeding *tour* adds something new.”

Circassians, Swiss, Poles, Hungarians, Albanians. Turks, Chinese, Red Indians, Persians, Spaniards, French, and English; queens, powdered, be-ruffed, and patched; civilians, wearing the aprons and other badges of the order of Freemasons; a pair of grisly bears—the arms of the Goths—waltzed and flirted like the rest; and last, though by no means the least important person in the room, a spurious Englishman!

This gentleman, a German long resident in Russland, kept that portion of the company near him in a perpetual excitement of laughter by the grave, and really very clever, critique on some of our English peculiarities. Hat in hand, he moved hither and thither through the crowd, arrayed in the most faultless full-dress suit, minus any approach to *bijouterie*, except a huge gold ring on the little finger of the right hand, the glove belonging to which he carried like a thread-paper drawn tight through the left. He also wore an enormous pair of sandy-coloured artificial whiskers, and an extraordinary long nose, also false. A perfect Liston, the ever-varying piquancy of his physiognomic illustrations were inimitable, for, with the aid of a neatly-trimmed black moustache, he presented himself, in different parts of the suite of rooms, under the different aspects of Frenchman, Spaniard, and Pole; but the Englishman was evidently his favourite impersonation. With the

most comical gravity, he addressed everybody with his universal "How d'ye do?" "What a fine day!" "Good bye."

Considering the impromptu nature of the *réunion*, and the little preparation permitted by the shortness of the invitation, the freshness and the tasteful arrangement of the dresses were surprising. The ladies, for the most part, personated historical notables, queens especially being the rage. Marie Stuart, Anne Boleyn, and Marie Antoinette attracting universal admiration. But the metamorphoses of the gentlemen were entertaining beyond description; although most of those present belonged to one or other of the *garde* regiments located in and around St. Petersburg, not one uniform was to be seen, many of the officers appearing to considerable disadvantage in civilian costume; but the majority were completely disguised as Turkish ladies, Polish ladies, nuns, and Russian maidens, wearing the national *seraphân*. Several veiled ladies, *d'une grande presence*, in bonnets and shawls, and of most portentous circumference round the skirts—a burlesque, evidently, on the crinolines, which begin to assume alarming pretensions for space—excited the most hilarious recognition, being well-known mirthful geniuses belonging to a famous Lancer corps, some of the officers of which have obtained a certain notoriety for their jokes *spirituels*.

After a succession of *contredanses* and fleeting tours of polka and valse, the ever-welcome mazurka struck up. This is the only dance performed here with any degree of grace. The Russians are passionately fond of dancing, and keep exquisite time; but this fascinating attribute of the dance is entirely thrust out by the prestissimo movements *en vogue*, and in this embellishment the noble is far outshone by the peasant serf. This national dance is the usual precursor of supper, and all the dancers join in it. The first preparation for this play-dance is numbers of chairs placed in a large circle round the *salon*, for the dancers to rest occasionally, as it is of longer duration than other dances. With a skilful leader, the mazurka becomes at once amusing and artistic; and a peculiar mode of marking the time at short intervals, by the military dancers rapping their spurs loudly together, presents to the stranger a novelty of expression particularly pleasing. As this dance affords greater facility for conversation and flirting than any other, the beaux select partners accordingly. A good dancer, a pretty girl, or some well-dressed friend, to whom politeness exacted a portion of their attention, may have been the ruling principle of choice during the previous part of the evening, but in choosing a partner for the mazurka, the affections are generally concerned.

Here the bride and her *fiancé*, the coquette and her victim, the married pair—who may not have met since the previous evening at a similar *réunion*—and the tyro in love, sit side by side, or follow their avocations through the mazes of the dance. A mother notes with keen eye her daughter's partner for the mazurka, and if, perchance, the same individual claims her several times during the season, busy match-makers augur a coming proposal.

Our host was the leader, and never was leader more indefatigable in keeping up the spirit of the dance to the most exciting degree. It was therefore not surprising that midnight found us almost incredulous of the fact that "Old Time" had scythed off four mortal hours since we had entered that temple of music and mirth. At this juncture, a truce was proclaimed between musician and dancer, and a brief respite allowed for rest, when cups of strong gravy-soup were handed.

Soon after our arrival, bonbons—those ever welcome "sweeties" of this still farther North—were carried round in large silver tea-trays, being arranged on mounts, or little stages of steps; on these the more expensive are placed, while those for immediate consumption lay in lavish numbers around. Of these bonbons, old and young partake, and it is a universal custom for matrons to carry considerable numbers home with them for their absent juveniles; this agreeable remnant of

a less refined, but more fraternal, age being the reward of the children left to mourn a mother's absence for a whole evening, the promise of bringing home bonbons for them drying up many a tear, and gladdening many a downcast little heart. The increasing refinement of the highest class is driving out this primitive, but pretty, custom, except at the parties of children. At the *réunions* of the middle and lower classes, however, it is still observed as of yore. This is evidently a remnant of that wholesale hospitality of a warm-hearted, generous people, which is still in full force among the lower orders in Scotland. I allude to the custom of "prigging"—not the "prigging" of English swell-mob slang significance—but to that hearty, though perhaps rude, insistence that a guest at table shall continue to partake of the good things set before him after his ability to eat another morsel has been taxed to the utmost. As regards fruits and sweets, the contumacy of the host can only be appeased by his guests "pouching," or putting into his pocket, what he cannot consume himself, for the "bairns" at home. It is precisely the same thing here, and carried out almost to the letter, the portable "goodies" being in both instances oranges, nuts, and bonbons, in Scotland, "sweeties," or mixed confections.*

* I have been thus explicit, because some English writers on Russia, in their ignorance of this old custom, have described it as "stealing."

These bonbons, which are largely manufactured by Italians in the capital, form a very expensive, but very agreeable, item at every entertainment. The commonest are about three shillings a pound, and those usually presented are about four shillings. Some of the more expensive, used for decorations, are 7s., 8s. and even 10s. each bonbon, but these are ornamented with some elegant device, worthy to be retained as the birth or name's day souvenir of some attentive friend; for baskets and boxes of bonbons are the usual gifts of the gentlemen to their lady acquaintance. On such occasions, even staid married folks indulge in these pretty interchanges.

At evening parties here, instead of retiring to a refreshment-room, as with us, cooling beverages, ice, &c., are handed, but rarely wine or negus. This is a refinement.

From the mazurka the company paired off to the dining-room for supper, the ladies being seated, the gentlemen hovering about in the vicinity. A table, spread with every luxury, stretched right and left, presenting scarcely any difference between it and one prepared for a similar number by a Gunter, but that this was the entire work of Sophie Alexandraïvena's own cook and his helps, and "got up" on the same impromptu style as his mistress's fancy ball. This was quite apparent, for some of the viands were

scarcely yet cold, though doubtless the most obstreperous had had a turn on the ice.

Pièces montés, and bagatelle-table effectives—dummies only made to be looked at—were wanting, but these were replaced by a species of *pièce montée*, highly effective and more comestible. This was a filigree basket, made of spun sugar, and filled with green and purple grapes, over which stood a transparent jelly, so exactly resembling a glass shade that my spoon had penetrated a portion of it on my plate, ere the illusion was dispelled.*

The dishes were handed as at dinner, everything in the way of carving having been performed previously, and flesh and fowl, cut up with that neatness acquired only by long practice, retained their original form. Wines there were in great variety, but champagne, as usual, appeared to be the favourite with all; the gentlemen partaking largely, the ladies very sparingly, and instead of “taking wine” with one another, as the English used to do, they pledged each other by making their glasses touch, as Burns and his merry friends did, and as the Americans do.

* Well packed cellars of ice, attached to every house, enable Russian cooks to perform wonders in their art on very short notice, and the fraternity existing between the members of this class brings many skilful hands and heads to assist a brother in a case of emergency like the present.

"I do drink like an Englishman," said a Russian officer, holding towards me a goblet brimming full of port wine.

"Pardon me," I replied, "but I never saw my countrymen drink wine of that strength out of tumblers."

"But it comes all to the same thing," he as quickly retorted; "they take a great many little ones, and I take it all at once in one large, and I know better by that means what I am about."

The Russians entertain the most exaggerated ideas of an Englishman's eating and drinking, and often remark, when they see an enormous dishful, "There's enough for an Englishman," and that however much they indulge in, they can never exceed an Englishman.

Amidst the buzz of tongues, and other noisy concomitants of the supper-table, a voice arose which almost instantly obtained the most profound silence.

"May I have the pleasure of taking wine with you?" asked the sham Englishman, addressing me from the opposite extremity of the table—having evidently been prompted by one of my Russian friends, whom he had escorted in to supper—the assembly, meanwhile, regarding the momentous ceremony with some curiosity, the pretended Englishman, at the same time, assuming an expression of gravity so grotesque as to convulse

with laughter most of those who regarded him. And a general "taking wine," English fashion, ensued, the peculiar gravity assumed for the occasion being the pith of the critique. His criticisms were so general—French, Germans, and Russians coming in for their share, that to feel the allusion otherwise than as it was meant—viz., as a bit of harmless pleasantry—would have been puerile; and none there, perhaps, enjoyed this very faithful satire on a very absurd custom—as a general one—more than the only representative present of that grave nation who, like Turks, do often carry their gravity or equanimity to ludicrous extremes.

But the Englishman, not forgetting that better part of his gravity—his loyalty—begged to propose a toast.

"Queen Victoria, of England," shouted our friend, raising his full glass above his head, when all the gentlemen not already on foot rose, and with a peculiar military-sounding outburst—something between a shout and a cheer—pledged our Queen in brimming tumblers of champagne, many exclaiming in pure English, "God save the Queen."

How was it possible to allow this expression of loyal politeness and kind feeling to pass unacknowledged? Inefficient and humble representative as I was of our noble sovereign, and that

blessed little island home far away amid the waters, I was, nevertheless, the only one present; not to have acknowledged it would have been traitorous to both. Deputing a friend to return thanks, I begged to propose the health of the Emperor Nicholas, following up the proposal with "Boja Tzara Chranie!" or God preserve the Emperor, in my best Russ.

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted all—the ladies joining—and the health of His Majesty having been drunk with the same honours, our host now stepped forward, and bearing aloft a goblet of champagne, called attention to the toast he was about to propose, "Les dames Anglaises."

"Les dames Anglaises!" shouted all present, accompanied by three downright British cheers. In the lull which followed, our persevering Englishman was on his feet again, but this time mounted upon a chair. He was about to make "a speech!"

It appeared that on the occasion of a recent visit to England, he had been present at an election dinner, and had been greatly interested in the speech, or rather the gesticulatory part of it, not comprehending a word of the language of the successful candidate. The general outlines of the speech had made a strong impression on his memory, and it was these impressions with which he proposed to favour the assembly, an exhibition altogether inimitable.

The "speech" consisted of gibberish so accented and punctuated, and interlarded with p's, and s's, and l's, and r's, and other elementary sounds common to our language, that it presented to the eye and ear the same effect as that of a speech delivered at too great a distance for those present to catch more than the prominent features.

The variation in the tones of this facetious actor, aided by gesticulations, was very clever, for his speech was thus as paragraphically divided as words could have effected it.

There was the timid, almost deprecatory, expression of meritorious humility, conscious to the fullest extent of the portentous honour just conferred on him by his constituents; then the bland, courteous self-satisfaction, as he laid before them the scheme of his political views, and the great deeds he meant to achieve in the way of Reform; and then the rising warmth with which he expatiated on the shoals and quicksands of party intrigue, upon which his predecessors had stranded their interests; and lastly, the deep truthful fervour of an earnest man who intends to be honest, as he promised to advocate and uphold the best interests of the trust reposed in him.

Never was speech listened to with more attention, and when, at its conclusion, light mirth once more took the initiative, "the speech and health"

of Mr. ——— was drunk with almost riotous applause.

The musicians having resumed their places, the ladies repaired to the *salon*—leaving the gentlemen to sup—and calling for the mazurka, threaded its mazes after a fashion of their own, considerably more *dégagé* than when dancing with partners of the other sex, but not the less graceful; five out of the seven queens taking part. The beaux, however, soon returned, and dancing, which recommenced with increased spirit, was kept up for an hour or two longer, it being near four o'clock before any one thought of taking leave.

Such is an impromptu ball in the height of the season at this gayest of capitals, Imperial St. Petersburg!

CHAPTER XII.

Death of the Grand Duchess Marie Michaëlovena—The Tzar Nicholas Chief Mourner—The Emperor in the Tomb of the Tzars—The Last Wish of the Tzar's Favourite Child—The Father's Agony—The Emperor Nicholas Feeding the Pets of his Lost Daughter—Mr. D. T———The Monarch's Severe Illness—The Peculator and Murderer—The Tzar's Substitute for his Uniform—Christmas Day—The Forsaken Fiancée.

"All that live must die, passing through nature to eternity."

BUT a damp is thrown over this gay world by the death of one of the daughters of the Grand Duke Michael, a fair young girl of eighteen; the Court is in sorrow, and the people mourn, for the amiable Grand Duchess was highly esteemed by all classes of her Imperial uncle's subjects.

Her remains have just been deposited in the Fortress, by the side of her beautiful cousin, the ever-to-be-lamented Grand Duchess Alexandrine

—the favourite daughter of the Emperor Nicholas—whose head is the first uncrowned one that reposes in the tomb of the Tzars.

The funeral of the Princess was extremely private—by her own request, it is said—and only her own immediate relatives, comprising almost exclusively the Tzar and his sons—for her parents were abroad at the time of her death—with her suite and attendants, were admitted to offer the last adieux to her whom in life they had so much cherished and esteemed.

One of the bearers of the young Princess was an intimate acquaintance of my friends, and, on paying us a visit a few days after, he described the grief of the Emperor Nicholas, on the occasion of her funeral, as having been intense. His Majesty was very partial to this niece, who had been a favourite with his almost adored child, the late Grand Duchess Alexandra.

The body of the Princess had been brought from Vienna, and, in the absence of both her parents, the Tzar arrived in St. Petersburg, from Tzars-Koë Celo, to represent them at its interment. Doubtless this visit to the spot which enclosed the remains of a daughter he had loved so passionately must have overcome him, bringing back, as it must have done, the harrowing recollection of that first great blow on his affections, for the mighty man was heard to groan, in the

anguish of his soul, as he entered the burial-place of his fathers and of his child.

The remains of the cousins rest side by side, the only uncrowned heads amidst that crowd of the crowned. But a few years since, the lovely young Grand Duchess Alexandra sank into her early grave, and it is said that her father, the Tzar Nicholas, has never been the same man since, for it shook his iron constitution to its very foundation. One of the incidents of her last hours on earth, as related to me by an eye-witness—the preceptress of her youth—is touching in the extreme.

The Grand Duchess—the particulars of whose death very much resemble those of our own lamented Princess Charlotte—was the wife of a German prince. Just before her death, the young Princess called the lady in question to her bedside, and, taking in her hand a miniature which she always wore attached by a chain round her neck, drew her careful attention to her last solemn wish—viz., that the miniature so much cherished might be laid on her breast in the coffin.

As her fair head lay supported amidst the embroidered pillows, and her attenuated hand grasped the treasure, relative to the destiny of which her fast failing voice made the last request, the form of one who had hovered about the bed of death for many days and nights, noting every

change in that fair young face with the most agonising solicitude, yet careful to watch unseen by the sinking sufferer, was now observed slowly to raise his manly form over the bed-head of the dying one, straining his vision to obtain a glimpse of the object that formed the subject of the departing one's last loving thought, and when, in that little diamond-encircled *bijou*, he beheld his own portrait, that strong man's Herculean frame trembled like an aspen tree shaken by the sweeping blast; his limbs refused their support, and the Tzar, her father—for it was he—sank on the bed-head, the huge drops of perspiration standing out upon his broad forehead—so great was the exquisite agony of his soul, pent up by almost superhuman exertion, lest by the most trifling sound he might disturb the last moments of that precious life, so nearly run to its close. With great difficulty the Emperor was supported to an apartment out of hearing of the Grand Duchess, where the internal struggling with his feelings was for some time fearful, until, relieved by a torrent of tears, and sobs, and groans, he somewhat recovered his equanimity.

The favourite summer retreat of this favourite daughter was the fine old Palace of Gatchina, situated about thirty miles from the capital, on the road to Warsaw. Here the young Grand Duchess had a family of pet swans, so tame that they fed from her hands; and one of her chief

pleasures was to tend these birds. At this pretty Gatchina, the diversified arrangement of wood and water, islet, temple, and bower, somewhat resembles our English Virginia Water, and in a little temple, dedicated to the three Christian Graces, Faith, Hope, and Charity—and which stands on a miniature promontory jutting out into a silver lake—the Princess spent some of the happiest hours of her young life, surrounded by her books, work, and music, and with her graceful pets floating about at her side.

To this temple the Tzar Nicholas daily repaired for many months after her death, spending hours alone, feeding with bread crumbs, which he carried in his pocket, these pets of his lost child, and finding the only balm to his wounded spirit in making friends of these cherished favourites of his cherished lost one.

As the close of the year 1847 may be deemed the dawn of an era fraught with changes to Western Europe, so may its commencement be said to have been an era of grave importance to the future of Russia, for to an incident which transpired about this time may be attributed the first palpable inroad made on the powerful constitution of the Emperor Nicholas, and the periodically recurring effects of which laid that iron frame upon a bed of suffering nearly every subsequent year.

Since the return of the Court to the Imperial City, we had remarked an enlivening change in our immediate neighbourhood. Within a few houses of our's, stood a handsome modern-built mansion, which, by its peculiar tinge of yellow, was known by all beholders to be one of those in which the crown lodges its public servants rent free, as well as providing on the same easy terms those household necessities of light, firing, and water.

Judging from externals, this city palace appeared to be dedicated to never-ending gaiety and amusement. Early and late, ever-arriving vehicles deposited some fashionable belle, or military exquisite, thronging the street in half its long length with a double tier of superbly-mounted sledges and heavier close carriages, while every night, or rather morning, as we returned home from our own gay revels, light, joyous light—that successful study in every Russian house—streamed out upon the snow-covered road from the long ranges of its many-windowed stories, and not unfrequently the flitting forms of lovely women and gaily-accoutred guard-officers, as they threaded the windings of the dance, or lounged near the windows, caught the still wide-awake eyes of some of us *en passant*.

“Who were our neighbours?” was a question one had asked of the other more than once.

Hitherto the inquiry had not extended farther; but the peculiar inkling of the sex at length inoculated the Countess, who, ordering her carriage to pay a batch of visits, promised to call on Madame la Générale de P in, who, it was well-known, knew everybody worth knowing in the capital, if not in the entire empire of all the Russias besides. Therefore, at dinner the same day, we were duly informed that the house in question was occupied by Mr. de T——, a magnate of high rank, who enjoyed a highly honourable and lucrative post under the crown, as well as a handsome private fortune of his own.

Mr. de T—— had several handsome daughters, all “out,” and one of whom was already the betrothed of a wealthy young nobleman. Rumour affirmed that it had always been a cherished project of Mr. de T——’s, to get them all off his hands in one season. For this purpose he had concentrated his strength to get through this momentous campaign with the utmost possible *éclat*.

Subsequently, we became slightly acquainted with these young ladies, whom we met at the *réunions* of a mutual friend. The intimacy, thus begun, bid fair to germinate into something like visiting, when, sudden and unexpected as a thunderbolt, the cup of pleasure was rudely snatched from their lips and dashed in fragments

to the ground, to be replaced by a chalice filled to overflowing with the bitters of dishonour, disappointment, and woe, which one of them at least—that unfortunate betrothed—quaffed to the very dregs.

“L'Empereur est malade,” grumbled out Cousin Kola, in a husky undertone, as he entered the demi-bedchamber of his aunt late one evening, and seating himself on the end of her little couch, sate swinging his helmet to-and-fro by the chin-strap, looking fixedly at something which appeared to be buried in the crown of it.

“Oui, l'Empereur est malade,” he again repeated after a pause.

“Since when, my son?” asked the Countess.

“Since yesterday evening, my aunt,” he replied in the same husky voice, and, again relapsing into silence, seemed lost in the depths of his casque.

“Is the Tzar dangerously ill then?” one of us inquired.

“God only knows, for no one cares to venture near him, not even the Tzaritza. Since yesterday at noon he has partaken neither of rest nor food, but paces constantly up and down his cabinet.”

“What is his ailment?” I pursued. But without replying to my question—which indeed he appeared not to have heard—he continued:

“Tell me, Marie Edwardovna, what they would do in your country to a criminal—a

monster in human form, who had systematically caused the death of 6,000 of his fellow-creatures, by purloining their clothes, and sending them in rags and bare-footed to walk through the frozen snow-plains of Siberia! Yes; 6,000 of our poor fellows have been thus sacrificed! They have died on the road, after experiencing unheard-of hardships, and 3,000 more are maimed for life, having reached their destination minus toes and fingers, and some of them even feet!" And the young aide-de-camp ground his teeth, and his eyes flashed fire in the potency of his wrath.

"But how has this happened?" asked several, simultaneously, and looking aghast at the account of this wholesale murder.

"Inquire of M. de T——, ladies—of your noble neighbour—that accomplished contriver of unrivalled *fêtes* and wondrous *divertissements*—that man of immaculate honour, so courteous, so polished—he who has encircled your neighbourhood with the sounds of feasting and mirth. Ask him, my friends," continued the young man, growing grand in the fury of his ire, "how fared it with the 9,000 brave fellows whom his Tzar commanded him to dispatch comfortably and substantially provided with every necessary for their long march to Siberia? Ask him of their patient sufferings, borne with a fortitude unheard of, as they shivered and groaned on their weary way,

clad in slops of the worst description, and in boots so badly stitched that they fell to pieces after a couple of hundred versts, while this man-monster pocketed the public money allowed for their proper outfit, and spent it in gambling and feasting. Ask him of the cheerless deaths of 6,000 of that little army whom he has sent to untimely graves. Ask what his Tzar shall tell their inquiring relatives—where repose the corpses of his victims? And ask him if he is ready to yield up a portion of his means for the support of those three thousand who must drag through life maimed and disconsolate, whose only hope now is in the grave. But what do I say?" continued Kola. "Ere now T—— is probably under arrest, and how will they punish him? Deprived of his post under the Crown—which of course he can never again serve—confined to the fortress for a few months, he will return to society, like a fraudulent English bankrupt, if anything, more substantially settled down in the world than he was before his dishonour, while 6,000 murders stain his soul, and 3,000 tongues curse him daily. And our Tzar, whom God preserve," said the young man—devoutly crossing himself as he uttered the name of God—"for the Tzaritza's sake, for his children's sake, and for our country's sake; but it is enough to drive him mad, so proud and careful as he is of his soldiers."

Nor were Kola's fears groundless. Terrible were the sufferings of the Tzar for days, as grief, vexation, and rage strove for the mastery in the Imperial mind, leaving him at length exhausted and prostrate, the victim of a dangerous fever.

By those immediately about the Emperor, this was announced to be the severest shock his physical system had ever sustained, and more lingering in its grasp than any previous attack—even of that deep-seated grief with which he so long struggled on the death of his daughter. So little was he accustomed to illness that the Emperor could ill brook the necessary confinement on this momentous occasion, or relax in the least from the severe military discipline of his habits.

Scarcely any entreaty could prevail upon him to exchange his uniform for a dressing-gown; and the Russian uniform being, like its French model, confined at the waist, left the Imperial invalid ill-at-ease when in a recumbent posture—at least so thought the doctor—and he therefore persisted in carrying his point, and at length obtained the Tzar's promise that he would leave off his uniform for a day or two. On the doctor's return, a few hours afterwards, he could scarcely repress a smile on beholding his sovereign arrayed in his military mantle, with his chamber-towel for a sash!

Christmas-day has come and gone, with all its

joyous bell-ringing, gun-firing, and thanksgiving, in commemoration of the French having evacuated the empire in 1812 on that day, leaving many pleasant impressions, and not a few grave reflections, the history of the de T—— family being one of the most impressive.

On our return home from the haunts of the gay, at midnight or morning, our eyes involuntarily sought the lengthy façade of the de T——'s noble mansion. But all there is now dark; nought save the pale glimmer of the ever-burning lamp before a shrine in some distant corner tells that it is still the abode of the living. No vestige of its former lightsome gaiety now remains, for the brilliant cavalcade no longer stops the way; no varied hues of the Tartar Jehu's bright-coloured head-gear, looking like colossal flowers in the sunny beams, nor flower-sewn horse-cloths, attract the gaze of the idler as he strolls in the sunshine, wondering what magnate lives there, who holds levees like a King.

And where are those fair girls of whom we used to hear so much, but of whom we hear nothing now—those fair faces whose joyous smiles and bright glances drew around them admiring, eager crowds? Alas! they sit in darkness and sorrow, bowed down with shame for their father's fault. So truly are "the sins of parents visited on the children."

And the gentle betrothed—what of her? Alas! alas! from London to Kamtschatka 'tis the same. She is forsaken in her sorrow; her *bon parti* has turned his back with the rest, and she raves in the delirium of brain fever. Society for the moment knows them not; the ever-seething vortex seethes on, scarcely heeding the incident, which, but that it affected the Emperor, would hardly have proved a nine days' wonder, so thoroughly French are the Russians in their dislike to dwell on the gloomy side of sentiment.

CHAPTER XIII.

New Year's Day—Old Customs and New—Our Cadet Visitors
 —The Tzar and the Soldier with the Whisky-bottle—The
 Peasant's Present to the Emperor—Amateur Theatricals
 at the Corps des Cadets—Charming Heroine—Novel Syl-
 phide—The Conscientious Officer—The Tzar and the
 Youth with the One-sided Diploma—Smart Cadets.

ACCORDING to almost universal custom on the Continent, New Year's day is kept as a *fête*; everyone goes to mass in the morning, after which visits, *pour féliciter*, are exchanged, and the remainder of the day is passed in amusement.

Most of the visiting, however, devolves upon the gentlemen, the ladies remaining at home to receive them; and those blessed—or bored—with an overgrown acquaintance, find it no easy matter to get through; Petersburg being built over so large a space, that it is like paying visits scattered all over London. Many of these gentlemen

return from their "labour" of love late in the day, wiping their brows, and vowing they never had such hard duty in their lives.

It is not deemed good taste to send cards of felicitation by post, or by a servant, though in cases of emergency it is done. But an excellent plan is superseding this wearisome driving about all day, which, besides presenting a decided convenience, offers facility for inaugurating the new year by gifts to the poor. This new plan is, to forward name and subscription to the office of the St. Petersburg Journal, when the former appears by way of advertisement—one of a long list of such names—and as every family of intelligence and fashion are subscribers to this newspaper, each one accepts this announcement on the part of any of their friends, as a visit paid to himself; and instead of leaving cards, and kind regards, or a new year's offering at their doors, these are replaced by a message of charity to their poorer brethren, in the substantial form of a gift in money.

"Once upon a time," when New Year's day fell on the first of September, a good old custom was observed in Moscow and other large cities in the interior, in many of which it is still extant. On that day the picture of St. Simeon was brought out with much ceremony from its ordinary resting-place in one of the churches, and was set up in the grand Place of the city. In its presence all

differences were arranged; all disputes and temporary difficulties adjusted; and pardons for petty offences exchanged among the citizens; in short, a general wiping-off of old scores, in order to enter upon the new year with fraternal hearts and lightened consciences.

Among our visitors on this convivial day, were two gentlemanly youths, cadets, from one of the several institutions for the military education of the sons of the nobility, the one to which they belonged supplying most of the officers for the guard regiments. Their uniform almost exactly resembles that worn by the cadets belonging to the Duke of York's School at Chelsea, and so much do many of them resemble the English in feature, that I was constantly under the impression that they were compatriots. Boy-like, their conversation was almost exclusively confined to school affairs, which, to a stranger, was highly interesting. The particular corps to which they belonged had for many years been under the immediate *surveillance* of the Commander-in-chief, the Tzar's youngest brother, of whom they stood in considerably more awe than they did of the Tzar. This feeling extended even to the commonest soldier; and they tell a story which is enjoyed by the "younkers" exceedingly, how the Tzar Nicholas one day met a raw recruit on the English quay; the man carried a bottle of vodka

under his coat, and a portion of the neck of it protruded from its hiding-place. The keen eye of the Emperor caught sight of it in a twinkling, and, touching the soldier on the shoulder, he pointed to the obtruding bottle, and said hastily, "Hide it, my child, hide it; here is the Commander-in-chief, Michael Pavlovitch, behind you." The poor fellow, in his fright, never for a moment regarded his Imperial informant in any other light than that of a kind friend who had warned him from "the wrath to come," and, in the simplicity of his simple nature, replied :—

"Where shall I hide it—where—where?"

"Into the Neva with it, quick, or he will be upon you," returned His Majesty.

The Tzar is said to have amused himself exceedingly by threatening all defaulters with the anger of his brother, the noble-hearted, generous Grand Duke Michael.

Strangers unacquainted with the child-like simplicity of some of these unsophisticated children of the serf class, and also ignorant of the patriarchal customs still extant in Russia, and of the fraternity of feeling induced among all classes thereby, might feel disposed to doubt the probability of the above anecdote, but hundreds of others, tending to elucidate the same feature of simplicity in their character, might be adduced to prove the truth of all. The following inci-

dent—the circumstances of which were witnessed by a whole regiment, and by a multitude of spectators, and which was related to me by an officer who was on duty close to the spot where it took place—will convey an idea of a class of occurrences by no means uncommon here.

At a grand review held in the Place d'Isaac, a moujik was observed making his way slowly, and with difficulty, through the dense crowd that surrounded the parade-ground. He carried a large sack on his back, the same being filled with something which caused an infinitude of small projections all over it, and which evoked many a joke, and pinch, and searching inquiry; the peasant, however, continued his way, heedless of all, except occasionally to ask of the nearest the whereabouts of the Tzar; which demand only served to increase the witty sallies of those of his own class among the crowd. Having pushed on until he gained the private entrance of the Winter Palace, he here encountered a group of laundresses; a long parley ensued between them. Presently they were observed to draw him, sack and all, into the comparatively empty space in front; here they helped him to disburden himself of the precious sack, which they carefully posed against the wall, the little women placing themselves on both sides of it as supporters and protectors, at the same time giving the unsophisti-

cated countryman certain directions, which, by a pantomimic kind of gesture, led those in the distance to suppose that they were intended to convey to him the proper mode of addressing a superior. The moujik now approached the arena of that portion of the Place which had been cleared for the use of the military, and round which the police were stationed at intervals, to prevent the encroachment of the crowd. Elbowing his way to the front, our hero was now, for the first time in his life, a near spectator of one of the finest military spectacles of which any power is capable, and bewildered, excited, and exhausted, the poor fellow had well nigh fallen to the ground, but for the friendly aid of a soldier who stood near. A death-like pallor suddenly overspread his fine face, and a trembling convulsed his limbs; the paroxysm, however, was but momentary, and as it passed away, he renewed his inquiries as to where he could find the Tzar.

"There is the Gasoudar, that is he," said a soldier, pointing in the direction of the admiralty side of the ground, where the Emperor Nicholas, in the full uniform of a Field Marshal, with his handsome heir at his side, and his two younger military sons a little in the rear, surrounded by a brilliant staff, formed a splendid group, before whom the *élite* of the military deployed in an endless variety of manœuvres.

"What does he want with the Gasoudar?" asked several in the crowd, one or more having noticed the pallor which overspread his countenance as he took up his position in front, and gazed intently around him.

"He is after no good, rely upon that," said others, in reply.

"Seize him, seize him!" shouted a policeman, as our knight of the sack set off at the top of his speed—which after all was little more than a something between a run and a walk, for he was dead tired—across the plain in the direction of the Imperial group.

"Seize him, seize him!" now resounded on all sides, and the poor fellow found himself a prisoner, and about to be dragged he knew not whither, when one of the stout little laundresses—a veritable friend in need—pushed her way to his side, and for some time arrested the attention of those around by the relation of some wonderful story, to judge by her declamation,—which seemed to evoke considerable sympathy from a few, but from others only laughter.

At this juncture the Tzar and his staff were seen approaching, which renewed the exertions of the police to get the moujic out of the way. But he, on the contrary, had no notion of yielding up an inch of his vantage ground, having so nearly reached the end of all his aspirations. Finding

remonstrance with his persecutors useless, he placed himself in an attitude of resistance. His cap had fallen off in the fray, displaying a luxuriant crop of rich auburn hair, which shone in the sunlight as if shot with gold, and which ever and anon he shook back, the better to behold his tormentors, who, one on each side, grasped at the open breast of his sheep-skin surtout. With his feet firmly planted on the ground, his broad chest thrown back, and muscular throat corded with the full veins, showing his athletic powers of resistance in their strong development, he thus stood, resembling a youthful Achilles, his classic-looking features and primitive dress adding to the heroic effect. Nearer and nearer came the Imperial party, till the Tzar himself was close to our still resisting hero.

“What is the meaning of this?” demanded the Emperor.

The police gave their report, when His Majesty ordered the peasant to be released, and asked him why he had broken through the rules, by trespassing beyond the barrier, where he might have been trampled to death in an instant by the sweeping clouds of soldiery. For some seconds, the poor peasant stood speechless, but at length, gathering up courage, — which had well nigh forsaken him at the last moment, when he found himself actually in the presence of that Gasoudar whom he had

made such an effort to reach,—he told his simple story, how he had walked all the way from the confines of Siberia with a bag of filberts on his back! His crop of nuts, he said, had been of larger size the past season than usual. Indeed, they were too fine and large for poor people like them to eat, and therefore, his wife and he had determined to send them to the Tzar! His wife had spun a superfine material to make into a sack, and his children and he had gathered the nuts, and not having a vehicle of any kind, and being too poor to hire one, he had taken the sack on his back and carried it nearly fourteen hundred miles! “And there are the nuts,” he continued, pointing to the formidable sack as it reposed on end, just under the very windows of the Tzar’s private apartments; “but remember, they are not all for you,” addressing himself to the Tzar, “one half are for Michael Pavlovitch!”

The Gasoudar graciously accepted the loyal offering; instead of being dragged off by the police, he was sent to the Winter Palace, accompanied by an official under orders from the Emperor, whither he was followed by his staunch friends, the laundresses, and an admiring crowd, many of whom had, but a few moments before, jostled and ridiculed him. His last words on bowing his leave-taking of the Gasoudar, brought a smile to the eyes, if etiquette forbade it

to the lips, of most of those who composed the Imperial *entourage*; for having already walked off some paces from the Imperial vicinity, he turned back, reiterating once more, "Now mind, half of the nuts are for Michael, the son of Paul!"

The simple moujic remained for some time the guest of the Gasoudar, who sent him in charge of an official to make acquaintance with all the wonders of the city, until at length, impatient to tell the people of his village of all the mighty things he had seen, and the "great good luck" that had befallen him, he asked permission to return home.

The Emperor had presented him with a little fortune in silver rubles, and having taken leave, made his preparations to walk homeward—the fourteen hundred miles over again! What, then, must have been his delight on being conducted to a substantial, well-appointed equipage—suitable to one in his rank of life—every corner and available part of which was carefully packed full of some useful article for his house, "braws" for his wife, and toys for his children! This was a surprise prepared for the serf by the Empress of all the Russias!

The poor fellow could no longer restrain his feelings, and, completely unmanned, he burst into tears; and falling on his knees, prayed that a

thousand blessings might rest upon the head of that excellent "Mother of all Russia."

Such incidents are as thornless roses growing in the path of the monarch, the beauty of which affords pleasure without alloy, and whose fragrance remains long after the season of their blooming has passed away.

But to return to our young visitors, the cadets; they had called to invite us to amateur theatricals, to come off at their corps—my friends having a relative in one of the chief officers of the establishment. There are usually about a thousand pupils in this institution, which is one of the best disciplined in the world. One half are cavalry cadets, the other infantry. Each division is under the immediate care of a colonel, and these officers are subject to a general, who is head over all and responsible chief. The college is a fine stone building, situated in the outskirts of the city, and composed of a main building and couple of wings. There are seventeen of these establishments in St. Petersburg; several of the same kind have been established by the nobility; one at Tula was founded as early as 1719, and another in the distant government of Tambov in 1800.

Accordingly, at the appointed time we repaired to the Institution, and were introduced into a "long chamber," to which the redoubtable

Etonian is a mere nonentity, and which, I believe, is the longest apartment in Europe without pillar supports. The pupils were assembled here, occupying benches arranged in rows like open pews in a church, having a passage or aisle up the centre. At the farther end of this "long chamber" an elevated platform, bounded in front by a row of footlights, constituted the stage, across which was drawn a crimson curtain. Some distance in advance of the footlights were a double row of chairs, over the back of each of which hung a playbill, neatly printed on pink and green paper. These were the reserved seats for the officers, their families, and friends. Towards the centre of these we were conducted to places; those right and left were soon after filled by ladies, the officers standing in the passage way, so as not to impede the view of the boys behind. A very select and very elegant little party awaited the rising of the curtain. Bright eyes, white throats, charming head-dresses, and the fragrant odours of *ess, de la mousline, et d'orange* shed an enlivening influence around; which doubtless had its due effect on that riotously inclined assemblage of "gods" behind, whose impatience at the retarded commencement of the play began to display itself in sundry murmurs and shuffling with their feet, which would have exploded into a hurricane, we were

told, but for the presence of so many ladies. Notwithstanding, the gloomy curtain still depended in sombre folds. The officers looked at their watches, as did several of the ladies, but still the impenetrable curtain uprose not. It was quite evident, however, from an occasional push against the same from within, that the "troupe" were rehearsing up to the last moment. Nor were the spectators at all disabused of the idea when at length the curtain parted in twain, and we caught sight of a fair demoiselle in flaxen ringlets and pink silk *robe montante*, flounced to the waist retreating with enormous strides, her dress gathered awkwardly up around her; and sporting thick-soled boots and blue cloth trousers, about a foot of which was exposed to view, and which passed not ungreeted by a stentorian roar of laughter from her *confrères* behind us.

The entertainment for the evening, as announced per "*affiche*," were extracts from popular Russian plays, in which the prevailing weaknesses of Russian social life appeared to be the *but* or moral in view. Long Latin orations, *à la Bombastes furioso*, delivered by fiery juveniles strutting in tunic, sandals, and all the other concomitants of the ancients, were here out of the question; for these military artistes had quite enough to do with the management of their own Greek-like

mother tongue, which even to the partially initiated stranger presents a twofold interest; for while it possesses that prominent feature common to the dead classics—viz., laconic dignity—it presents, at the same time, a larger proportion than usual of the sentiment, vigour, and fluency of ordinary living ones.

Several *entr'actes* depicted scenes in everyday Russian life;—the peculator *chenovenick*, or clerk, being one of the best of these minor delineations.

Once more the crimson curtain hid the little stage from view, and I was almost afraid the entertainment had concluded; but no! it again parted in twain, and a sylph in tulle, with silver wings on her back, and a fillet of gems round her head, twirled about on the “light fantastic toe,” now *sautant* like a Cerito, now mincing *à la* Elssler, and now combining the wonders of both *à la* Carlotta Grisi.

Crinoline is now in as much disrepute with the *haut ton*, as a couple of months since it was *la fureur*, and the Russian belles have all suddenly become thin, which is styled being *à l'Anglaise*. The gentlemen, one and all, ridicule the absurdity of these extremes, and the youngsters, who are veritable young Punches—nothing escaping them—have now taken it up. One appeared in a superb blue silk dress, made in the height of the fashion,

garnished with several flounces, but so lanky in appearance, for want of a *jupon*, that in the midst of the shout elicited by the lath-like figure, the skirt parted from the body, and down it fell to the ground. The sylphide—who also sustained several varied characters in the other pieces—was the son of a man of very high rank, and a youth of extraordinary talents.

The examinations for passing in this corps are becoming annually more difficult. But once passed, a youth may enter any of the guard regiments he pleases. These examinations over, the successful candidate for promotion receives a diploma signed by the Colonels and the General. It has happened that idlers and “stupids,” because the sons or other relatives of influential men, have, by favour, obtained their diplomas fully signed, when they ought to have been rejected; but on a recent occasion, so inefficient was one of this class that the Colonel under whom he studied, refused to sign his diploma, much to the annoyance of the other two officers, and to the chagrin of the youth and his friends. He passed, however, or rather he obtained his diploma, though minus a signature; but the conscientious officer was, in consequence of his refusal, subjected to much annoyance from his brother officer and from his chief, and it was even represented in high places that he was not exactly the kind of man

for the post he held, as he was influenced too much by his feelings, &c.

Sooner or later, truth, like "murder will out," and on the occasion of a grand review the following summer—one at which several distinguished foreigners were present—the unlucky wight with the one-sided diploma found himself manœuvring under the very eyes of the Tzar himself, and attempting an evolution he knew nothing whatever about, for both he and those under his command made some unpardonable blunder, and the Emperor, highly incensed, reprimanded him on the spot. Next day his diploma was examined by the Tzar, when the missing signature told its own tale, and the aspersions with which the conscientious officer had been attacked were thus scattered to the winds. The Tzar signified to the officer in question his appreciation of his conduct, adding a promise which ere now is doubtless faithfully fulfilled. | With that indefatigable decision of purpose for which he is so remarkable, and which never permits an opportunity for improvement to slip unheeded by, His Majesty turned this important incident to permanent account, by making it rule henceforth, that the daily marks denoting the progress of every youth should be summed up periodically, and examined by the Commander-in-chief or by the Tzar himself; and farther, that these marks should be condensed

and inserted on the records of the Institution, as well as on their diplomas.

Many of these youths are extremely well informed on general subjects, and their proficiency in geography, and other such elements of a useful education, would surprise a few of the "fifth-form" boys at Eton. As linguists, most of them speak French and German well, and many of them several other languages. The manœuvring of the cavalry cadets is quite astonishing. As a general rule, these are smarter than their infantry *confrères*; there is all the *élan* and dash of a soldier in his prime about the little fellows, as, with inimitable boots, and jingling spurs, and manly tramp, they promenade among the fashionables on the Nevsky, or go through the camp drill at Peterhoff; and their gentlemanly bearing in the dance is remarkable, though, like our little "middies" at a ball, full grown ladies are rather shy in accepting "*l'invitation pour la danse*" from such tiny aspirants, and make use of them only between them and want; they are however the most respectfully devoted and gallant little partners at this age that any lady could desire, for by the time they have worn their one-star epaulets a few months they become rather too *dégagés*, and twirl their partners about with a freedom of which the Russian ladies sometimes complain, but for which, as mothers and

sisters, they have only themselves to blame, being the certain result of their own carelessness or frivolity. This however wears off after years spent in duty at home, with occasional visits abroad, where, mixing in superior female society of other nations as well as his own, the *ci-devant* cavalry cadet returns to his native *salons*, one of the most refined and best informed members of the fashionable *réunions*.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pleasures of a Russian Winter—Lent—The Countess Kleinmichel's Fancy Fair—The Emperor's Visit to the Fair—Tableaux Vivants—Gratis Classes at the Academy of the Fine Arts—Lectures at the Countess Kleinmichel's—Two Charming Girls—Lineal Descendants of King David speaking pure English—The Gift of the Tzar—Arduous Studies of Young Girls—Russian Generosity to Preceptors—The Moscow Countess and her Pensioners—The Frenchman and his Fourth Wife.

WHO can reasonably complain of the length of a Russian winter? Certainly, no one having the most meagre pretensions to rational resources within themselves. Here are the most brilliant mornings in the world for indoor pursuits of an artistic kind; light, pure, steady, and unobscured by the slightest cloud; quiet nooks in shady groves, fragrant with flowers, and pervaded by the temperature of an Italian summer, for the student; all the amusements out of doors usually to be

met with on the Continent, as varied and as frequent as the most inveterate pleasure-seeker can desire.

Little wonder then if we stared at Lent as at one having come before it was wanted. The long sober fast is actually upon us ere the festive chimes which ushered in the new year have well died away. The carnival, and all its whirling revelry, has rushed past like a mighty torrent, leaving the late gay revellers to the calm of repose, for that solemn season when the faithful Christian, of whatsoever denomination, desires to commune with his own heart and to be still.

Lent is a particularly solemn period in the Greek Church; the giddiest of its members keeping its trying fasts with the obedience of dutiful children; while the stricter disciplinarians succumb to its rigours, till they faint by the way, for there is no mockery of purchasable indulgences permitted by this church. Amusements of all kinds are now interdicted, with the exception of concerts, *tableaux vivants*, lectures, and fancy-sales for the benefit of the poor. The young resume their studies with increased energy, to make up for the past lost week. Steady matrons ply the embroidery-needle or crochet-hook, in order to complete some elaborate piece of work, long since begun, to raffle for the poor.

The Countess Kleinmichel, as President of the

Committee of "Dames Patriotiques," now holds her grand fancy-fair for the benefit of the institution over which her direction extends, aided by her matron colleagues and their pretty daughters, who preside at the various stalls of their mothers, and prove the most bewitching saleswomen in the world, as some of their customers, both "militaires et civiles," know to their cost. The elegant arrangement of these stalls, and the choice bagatelles they display, presided over by enchantresses and fairies in the most tasteful costumes; the light elegant dresses of graceful women, as they circulate about the hall; the prevalence of military uniform; the Italian temperature, laden with perfume; the charming adjunct of flowers and shrubs; and though last, by no means the least attraction there, the presence of some member of the Imperial family—all combine to form a picture of grace and beauty such as few strangers, either within or beyond the limits of the empire, can have the most meagre idea.

The Emperor is generally a large purchaser, visiting most of the stalls, chatting pleasantly with the fair vendors, turning over their bagatelle chattels to select the prettiest for his starucha—or old woman, as he lovingly calls the Empress—who, he facetiously tells them, is so particular, that he shall be sent back with the purchases, should they not please her! Each has her own little history

of the monarch's visit, of his sayings and doings, affability and wit, which she treasures up for life as a *souvenir* never to be forgotten; for many a young *demoiselle* here present does not belong to the court circle, and may thus have encountered the Tzar for the first and last time in her life.

Tableaux vivants are also a favourite pastime at this season, and at this same lady's residence several pretty allegorical representations have been got up, as well as a variety of others, one of which, entitled "The Cabinet of an Author," was personated by one of the first Russian writers of the day; himself, pen in hand, formed a concentration of interest.

But one of the most delightful resorts of the past fortnight, twice or thrice a-week, has been to the Academy of the Fine Arts, on the island quarter. This institution, founded by one of the Grand Duchesses, is an incalculable boon to many. Here, instruction in drawing is offered gratis to all who like to avail themselves of the privilege, and English faces, mingling with those of other foreign nationalities, are there to attest their appreciation of the immunity. Many a noble lady, and wealthy merchant's daughter, and poor governess sit side by side, equally free to partake of the benefit, and equally grateful; for the instruction is the best the Russian crown can procure for them. Many an

elaborate bunch of flowers, group of fruit, splendid head, and entire groups of figures, left as proof pieces by departed pupils, show to what extent numbers have profited. One gorgeous bouquet, subscribed with the name of "Halliday," attracts every stranger's eye, and upon it that of a compatriot rests with especial gratification.

The several classes are held in different apartments, each superintended by their respective masters, and a lady who never loses sight of her charges; while a General, in full uniform, supervises the various departments, looking into everything, and keeping all up to their duties. Only a slight previous acquaintance with the elements of drawing entitles a candidate to admission, a privilege which is at once granted after the request has been made, the least possible formula being employed on the occasion of entrance, for which every facility is offered, nothing being easier, whether to the native or foreigner. When pupils who have become proficient leave the Academy, they are permitted to take drawings home to copy, even to the interior. I have known some of these carried off to the confines of Asia, for practice during the summer. Prizes are given by the crown, and the Imperial family, one and all, take a deep interest in the institution; *which, in its liberality, teaching, and order, is one of the most valuable that can grace a civilised city.*

But the Peterburghers—ladies especially—have made a move in a new direction, and among the most fashionable entertainments at the present moment are lectures on science, held at the houses of the nobility. To the first of a series of these, to come off at the Countess Kleinmichel's, we repaired one evening about seven o'clock. On our arrival we were ushered into a *salon*, spacious as a public concert-room, and plainly, but elegantly, decorated in white and gold; its long range of windows being hung with crimson velvet drapery, looped up with gold. A semi-circular arrangement of covered benches extended around the lecturer's table, which, covered to the ground with crimson cloth, supported an imposing collection of scientific apparatus. The apartment was brilliantly lighted with pendent globes and *bras de mur* lamps.

Here we were received most graciously by the amiable mistress of the mansion and her two elder daughters. Our Countess was led off by the former to the chair seats in front reserved for the matrons, while the Barishnü* of her party were conducted by the latter to places among the younger ladies a short distance in the rear. After a little gossip, our young hostesses fluttered off to welcome other arrivals. The noble apartment began to fill rapidly, and the

* Young ladies.

benches already presented a fair specimen of the grace and beauty of Petersburg, most of their occupants being young, all noble, the majority pretty, and more than one very lovely, and arrayed in charming *demi-toilette*; while the gentlemen, chiefly military, as usual, formed a dashing, sparkling, flashing phalanx—a truly Imperial guard of honour around. Certainly I had never contemplated so *distinguè* looking an audience before a lecture-table; or, as the sequel proved, one more intelligent or attentive.

At length, in walked the lecturer, a heavy, phlegmatic-looking German, speaking French with a strong accent, which was soon forgotten, however, in the all-absorbing interest evoked by his graphic elucidation of the subjects upon which he entered, and the variety of his experiments.

The chief topics for consideration were the history of Electricity and Galvanism, with a cursory glance at Chemistry. To numerous pretty and interesting experiments, succeeded that of the electric-light, which was hailed with a loud burst of admiration; the lecturer winding up with a lucid explanation of the electric telegraph, which he illustrated by means of the most perfect little model. At the conclusion of the lecture, several noble matrons in the front ranks approached the lecturer and most courteously acknowledged the pleasure he had afforded them.

By no means *ennuyées*, many of these fine intellectual-looking women—among whom I descried the tall commanding figure and English repose of countenance of the venerable Madame Potemkin—circulated round the table, scrutinizing every portion of the elaborate apparatus with intelligent interest; while a crowd of young beauties had taken the worthy lecturer by storm, and for the second time he described to them the vagaries of that famous battle, whose varied outpouring had amused them so much. A group of young military stood “dangling their bonnets and plumes” at a respectful distance behind, and several veteran military examined the telegraph, which one of them worked for himself.

Our hostess and her daughters were by no means inactive meanwhile, but going from one to another of their guests, engaged a certain number of them for tea; the majority had, however, by this time departed.

To a Londoner, taught by so many sacrifices the value of space, the size of the apartments, even in ordinary houses, appears to be of such lavish dimension that the large *salons* in some of the large houses in St. Petersburg are a positive journey to get across, and a locomotive on a small scale, or a perambulator on a large, might be used advantageously. As it is, one has quite a constitutional walk from the entrance-door to the where-

abouts of the mistress of the establishment, often through a suite of these halls. There is space enough, anyway, for a whole squadron of Lancers might manœuvre within the precincts of many.

Into one of these Imperial apartments, richly carpeted, luxuriously furnished, and hung round with crimson-velvet drapery, looped up with massive cords and tassels of gold, we now defiled, and truly the grouping of the various *coteries* told with brilliant effect.

Some of us had lingered so long in the lecture-room, that most of those we now joined were already discussing the merits of tea—such as few English people ever tasted—and *sucharie*, as well as those of Electricity and Galvanism. A little table, with surrounding lounges placed conveniently near the door, enabled us to form a *coterie* of our own, the rest of “the gay world forgetting, by the world forgot,” except when my stranger’s eye roamed with curiosity over the pleasing scene, everywhere enlivened by the great variety of military uniforms; for although uniforms dominate and predominate in every society here, yet it is rarely that one encounters at one house a great variety. For instance, the eldest son of a family may belong to the regiment of the *chevaliers de garde*; at his mother’s *réunions* a large proportion of the gentlemen will be his brother officers; his brother may be in the *Brèobréjensky garde*, and most of

his friends would probably, though not necessarily, belong to this "crack" regiment; consequently, the uniform of these two would predominate. This is the case at most fashionable parties, unless variety is made a study—which it often is for the sake of effect—but then one's circle of acquaintance must be very extensive. However, on the present occasion, our host being a minister of the Crown, impartial courtesy exacted equal attention to all. Thus there were present, representatives of nearly every *garde* regiment in and around the capital, who were now grouped about, some lounging near a mother, sister, or fair friend; some standing in little knots of two and three, showing to their best advantage. But our lecturer was the "lion" of the evening; and, as he stood, coffee-cup in hand, surrounded by some of the first nobles in the land, he must have felt highly flattered at the respectful attention which, as the representative of science, his presence commanded. Frivolity, either in demeanour or conversation, seemed to have shrunk abashed to an invisible distance, and the youngest girl there to have been transformed into a propounder of wisdom.

Two young ladies, sisters, about seventeen and eighteen, attracted our particular attention, as being very superior in conversation to the generality of *demoiselles* of this age. They

seemed to be well acquainted with the various subjects upon which the lecturer touched, and in the course of conversation made use of several scientific technicalities to aid their description, with the most unstudied facility; yet, there was nothing of the boldness of blueism about either of them; on the contrary, they exhibited a diffidence that almost feared to be heard, descanting on themes so far superior to the ordinary topics of feminine conversation in the *salons*.

By one of these young ladies we were made acquainted with the gigantic working of the telegraph communications throughout the empire, which she computed almost to a verst; and many other topics of general information, bearing upon the progress of the country, the relation of which seemed to afford ~~this~~ young patriot as much gratification as it did us to listen.

"Tell me, I pray, who are those charming girls?" I enquired of our young hostesses, as the ladies in question gracefully took their leave of us.

"They are the Princesses B——," she replied.

"But tell me something more about them. Are they Russians?"* I pursued.

* Experience taught me thus to preface most enquiries when they related to individual circumstances, for, like strangers in London, I set out with the idea that residents in the capital,

"They are of Georgian extraction, and of the royal line of Imeritia, and perhaps it may interest you to learn that their family can trace their descent from King David the Psalmist," said my informant.

Certainly it did seem somewhat curious to hear a lineal descendant of the house of the great Psalmist discussing telegraphs and railroads, steam and electricity, in the purest English!

Soon after, a move among some of the members of our party denoted a project of some kind, and

speaking the native language, must be natives, and took impressions accordingly. Never was there a greater mistake. One example will suffice to elucidate this. Having occasion to visit an English practitioner, in company with a country-woman, I mounted, as directed—never having been at his house before—to the first floor, and rang, as I supposed, his door-bell. It was opened by a coarse-looking woman, wearing huge gold ear-rings, and having that disagreeable black eye common to the lower order of French women. "Is Mr.—— at home?" I enquired in Russ. But without deigning one word in reply, the fury banged the door in our faces, and left us staring at each other, rather nonplussed.

"Who but a Russian could do a thing like that?" said my compatriot, who was the English servant of an English friend, just come to the capital. After some hunting about, I found the *concierge*, from whom I learned that Mr. ——'s house was the half "flat" opposite to Madame B——'s—the fury. "And what is Madame B——?" I enquired, with all the impertinence of a low Yankee. "She is a corset-maker," replied the man. "But is she a Russian?" I persisted. "No, she is a French-woman," he replied, with a comical look, accenting the negative very strongly, and drawing it out to an interminable length.

as I looked with inquiring eyes, one of our young entertainers approached and whispered that she was going to show my Russian friends some fine Sèvres china, which was considered very handsome; would I care to accompany them?

Cheerfully acquiescing, we followed our graceful young leader, who suddenly disappeared, like a witch or a fairy, among the pendent folds of the heavy velvet *portières*, through which all plunged in succession, and we found ourselves traversing a little world of *salons*, ante-rooms, and stone passages, all comfortably heated to one temperature; and the floors of the passages being actually *padded*, some soft material having been laid down thickly under a fine hempen matting, until at length we diverged into a long corridor. Anticipating an exploration of a china closet, or antique cabinet, or corner *armoire*, with countless tiers, supporting heir-looms of the artistic grotesque, I was not a little surprised on being introduced into a spacious bed-chamber, every article of the furniture of which was formed of Sèvres china! Bedstead, wardrobe, cheval-glass, couch, screens, tables, chairs, fire-place, all of the same superb and costly manufacture, either in itself entire, or in conjunction with wood.

"Why, this exceeds anything, even in the august Winter Palace itself," I involuntarily exclaimed.

"For the simple reason," returned our young

hostess, "that it is an Imperial gift. The tastes of the Imperial family are simple. They surround themselves with the attributes of comfort more than show, and for the State apartments there, such an arrangement as this would scarcely be appropriate; but with us it is entirely one of State, and will be preserved to the future generations of our family, as a token of that Imperial favour which my parents have the honour and happiness to possess."

On our return to the drawing-room, we made a little *détour* in order to visit that part of the establishment occupied exclusively by the youth and juveniles of the family, with their tutors, governesses, and nurses. From the study of the elder boys, as we passed, issued the quivering tender strains of the *Rêveries de Roslin*—all the rage at the present moment—played with the pathos of a veteran artist by a youth of twelve, who, the instant the lecture was over, had rushed off to his piano as to a pastime. From this apartment issued at the same moment an extremely handsome middle-aged priest, in robe of dark blue silk, with rich wavy locks of auburn hair floating on his shoulders. He wore a heavy iron cross suspended round his neck. Saluting us as we passed, he strode on, and disappeared round an angle of the corridor.

Time forbade our visiting the various studies in

detail, as having been promised the inspection of some of her handiwork in the way of embroidery and drawing, our young friend therefore led the way to her own rooms direct. These consisted of a very pretty suite of small apartments, in the outer or reception one of which they practised music, &c., and which was hung with chintz drapery so as almost to resemble a tent. Beyond this, through an open archway, a very pretty *tableau vivant*, afforded a glimpse into the "interieur" of these young ladies' home life. At a table in the centre sat two ladies, both young and tolerably good looking, their respective nationalities apparent at a glance. One was French, the other English; they were both engaged at some light needle-work. These were the young ladies' governesses, while, at the opposite side of the table, stood the interesting priest, intent on a packet of manuscript, which he was apparently correcting.

Religious instruction, superintended entirely by a clergyman, forms part of the education of young people belonging to the Greco-Russian Church. They "learn"—as it is called—their religion, the same as they would Grammar or Geography—and an excellent plan it is—and prepare their Scripture exercises accordingly.

The pastor, having finished with the brothers of the young ladies, now waited for them; therefore

we hastened our departure, leaving the amiable young Countesses to the conclusion of their studies.

The life of young ladies educated at home is at this age—just on the eve of “coming out”—laborious in the extreme. From an early hour in the morning until all hours of the night—and even the small hours which succeed—they are either engaged with masters, or are preparing for them, having to make up as they best can for such hindrances as that just described, with others of a similar nature, which their promotion to long skirts and turned up *chevelure* exacts. With all their love of amusement, dress, show, and extravagant expenditure upon costly bagatelles, there is no question upon which the Russians are more sensitive or more lavish than on that of education; and although the rage for accomplishments has hitherto gone far to the exclusion of more useful, enduring, and profound studies, this is not likely to be the case much longer with a naturally grave, thoughtful, and progressive people. Indeed, better things have already dawned, and a Russian lady is no longer content to speak French, German, English, or Italian like a native, through the ear only, unless she writes grammatically, and knows something of the literature of each. Nor is this all—she is not satisfied with herself unless she writes in the peculiar handwriting that characterises each. The rich spare

no cost on this important question, and surround their children with the best professors, tutors, and governesses they can procure, preferring them to be taught by individuals who have made but one art, or two at most, the study of their lives. Hence, a variety of instructors, but they feel more assured, and with reason too, that their children will be better taught.

Of tutors and governesses who reside in Russian families, not a tenth part of the requirements are expected or permitted which are exacted of the same class in Britain. The Russians say, and with much wisdom, "that only a master of his trade should teach others, and if seven years are necessary for the acquirement of one, how is it possible that a man or woman should, with confidence, undertake to teach half-a-dozen?"

There are two things which surprise Russians exceedingly when they visit our shores, and which are somewhat analogous, viz., the oppressive lives of governesses, from the unreasonable number of requirements exacted of them, and the terribly oppressive lives of horses employed by the middle and lower orders. Their accounts of what they have seen, single* horses in private flies,

* In most Russian sketches of English street-scenes, the private carriages are represented with one horse. Their engravings of our Exhibition of 1851 are garnished with a few double-bodied flies, each drawn by a wretched cat-like horse.

broughams, cabs, and carts compelled to do, galls English ears to hear, but which, unfortunately, is irrefutable, for who among us is a stranger to these truths?

Large salaries are given to tutors and governesses for the little required, which, of the English, is seldom more than the instruction of their own language, and drawing perhaps, or English and singing; and for this easy duty as much as £100 per annum is given; and to a lady somewhat advanced in years, who is deemed suitable for the moral training of young girls, as much as £250, and this too with the use of a carriage, and other immunities unheard of in Britain. With old Russian families, it is the patriarchal custom to pension off their tutors and governesses after a certain number of years spent with them; such is the *largesse* of the Russians in this respect, that many English ladies, but scarcely past their prime, have been enabled to retire to their own country with comfortable competencies, some of them with £100 per annum! This is doubtless the case with the same class of other nations.

It is by no means uncommon for tutors and governesses to have their wives, husbands, and even several children, resident with them in the families where they teach. Now, however, except in the far interior, this old custom is becoming

obsolete, not a few of the Peterburghers having been disgusted by their experience in this respect, from the advantage taken of them, and the ingratitude they met with from these exotics from the West. In the interior, it is very common to meet several tutors and their wives, or governesses and their husbands, permanently settled down in families as pensioners for life, after finishing the education of some member of it, either deceased or married at a distance.

Miss Eshemoff, the Russian authoress of an interesting sketch of Moscow, gives a pleasing account of one of these patriarchal old ladies, one of the real Muscovite great ones, hospitable, friendly, and gracious, whom it seems almost a privilege to know.

“Everybody who lives with the Countess must be very happy,” continues Miss Eshemoff. “Her companion, and the young ladies who visit her, complain that their hostess will rarely permit them to walk for exercise; when they do succeed in obtaining her consent, her carriage-and-four follows them. The Countess cannot imagine anyone preferring a walk to a drive, and says “young people are so full of whims.”

At the luxurious table of the good Countess we met an *original*, in the person of a French gentleman who had been the tutor of her brother. For forty years he had been her guest, during which

time he had married four times. His last wife, about fifty, was now at his side, dressed like a young girl; they had been married a year. I could not help laughing at their display of affection for each other; she chose the best bonbons to put on his plate, and he called her *ma mie*. She has a passion for dogs with broken legs; one, she picked up in the street, and talks of it as if it were a child, and her husband carries it about everywhere after her; so you may suppose how little he has to do. But why should he busy himself? He has apartments, board, salary, servants, &c., still allowed him by the good Countess, and which he has enjoyed ever since he finished the education of her brother.

CHAPTER XV.

Similarity of the Russians and Scotch—Characteristics of the Slavenæ—Possibility that the Russians and Scotch owe their Origin to One and the Same Tribe among the Scythians—Russian House-Spirits—Malvina's Encounter with the Spirit of the Night—Pretty Easter Custom.

“Strange how our superstitions twine
Each with the next, until a line
They weave, that through each varied page
Runs on, from infancy to age.”

AND stranger still, the many things I find here in
common

“To thee who wert, to thee who art,
In sun and shade, through good and ill,
Scotland—my home—my country still.”

If the Scots are descended from the Scythians, as historians assert, many similarities in the habits, features, character, customs, and even superstitions of the Russians of the middle governments

and the Scotch of the North may be accounted for.

Scythia is described as having been a large country, comprising the modern kingdoms of Tartary, Russia in Asia, Siberia, Muscovy, the Crimea, Poland, part of Hungary, Lithuania, and the Northern parts of Germany, Sweden, and Norway. And the Scythians—as divided into several tribes or nations, inured to bear labour and fatigue, to despise money—as living on milk and honey, and covering themselves with the skins of animals. Their government was monarchical, and they paid the utmost deference to their sovereigns.

One of these Scythian tribes was the Slavenæ, from which come the Russians, Poles, and Bohemians. The Slavenæ inhabited that part of Europe lying between the mouth of the Elbe and the Oka,* east and west, and between the Baltic and the mouth of the Don, north and south. Slavenæ, in the Slavonic and Russian languages, signifies “glorious,” and the Slavenæ, according to the standard of those days, appear to have been worthy of their name. They were robust and handsome; in war, fierce and implacable; proud of their ancestry, honest and hospitable—so honest, that the word of a Slavon was

* The Oka falls into the Volga at lower Novogorod.

his bond; neither writing nor oath was deemed necessary to bind him; in making a compact, he merely said:—"If I break my word, let shame overtake me." They were so hospitable that a stranger might enter a stranger's house, and find a home.

If the Scoti were Scythians at all, their natural characteristics, which have descended to the present day almost unalloyed, point to these glorious Slavenæ as their ancestors rather than to the Galli. This hypothesis is considerably strengthened by a comparison of the fundamental principles of the Scotch and Russian character, which, after ages of turmoil and change, essentially remain the same. Nor is it in character only that they assimilate. There are two distinctive features inherent to both these nations, almost powerful enough in themselves to stamp their common origin as proceeding from one nation or tribe; these are their high cheek-bones and red hair; not the fair or yellow hair of the Fin, but the "carroty," so common to the Scotch, and which is said to have descended to them through their King, Fergus I. of legendary story, the people thus acknowledging its high antiquity as a feature belonging to their earliest associations.

The traveller in Russia cannot have failed to notice this peculiarity over the other people of the Continent. The Russian peasantry even note this

unusual feature in themselves, by yielding to a red-haired man the palm of beauty; for a red or "lemona" bearded beau is regarded with especial favour by the peasant belles.

The early history of Scotland is involved in such a mist of obscurity, that all concerning it is likely to remain a mere speculation; unless, indeed, future research among the ancient records of Russia—of which there is an unexplored mine of wealth in our British Museum—may serve to throw any light on the Scythians and the destination of some of their wandering tribes, or an emigration from those more stationary, Scythia, that "vast and mysterious" region, seems to have been the same *terra incognita* to the ancient fathers of history, as that Russia which has risen upon this mighty Scythia's grave is to those of our times.

In the absence of any more elucidatory, the generally received opinion of the origin of the Scots is, that they belonged to the Galli, a tribe of Scythian extraction, who, revolting against the Roman Empire, sought refuge in Ireland and Scotland. But, considering the many and strongly-marked features which link the Russians and the Highlanders of Scotland in their history, past and present, it is almost impossible to look at the ancient map of Europe without supposing, as a possibility, that the Slavenæ who commanded the passage of the

Elbe might have made an excursion across the German Ocean some fine morning; proceeding in the same line as the course of the Elbe, straight as the crow flies, they would naturally run bump against the headlands of the Scottish Highlands.

Where all is doubt, one palpable theory is as good as another. Leitch Retchie, in his elegant work on "Scott and Scotland," says, in reference to this subject:—"In short, in whatever way the subject is viewed, a mystery hangs over the Scottish people, and to dissipate this, or try to do so, the enquirer must not be content to follow in the old traces; he must suspect a difference in the cause where he finds so irreconcilable a difference in the effect; and ask boldly whether the chain of circumstances operating on the destinies of Scotland was not really different from that which involved the fate of the rest of Europe."

If the Scoti were an off-shoot or transplantation from the Slavenæ, this query is satisfactorily answered in the thousand and one features of resemblance inherent to the two nations, of course making due allowance for the changes exacted by the isolation of a few from the main body—and that too in a foreign soil—as well as for those habits induced by the transmutation of the great mass of the Russian people from a warlike to a pastoral life. But in all the essential

elements which constitute character, the Russians and the Scotch of the North are the same. There is that deep solemn devotion, almost amounting to fanaticism, on the subject of their faith; that canny craft, so proverbial to both; their superstitions—in many of which there is a close resemblance; that wonderful indifference to physical suffering, almost savage in its strength,—the same support under defeat and perseverance until the end is gained; the same wandering propensities—for a Russian, if he cannot get beyond the limits of his country, will travel all over it, up and down, and back again. With them, as with the Scotch, there are traces of these wanderings in their earliest records; and notwithstanding the difficulties in their way on this score, Russians are to be met with all over the Continent of Europe, China, Persia, Syria, British India, America, and some even as settlers in New Zealand. And this, too, in conjunction with the most intense nationality and love of country. Nor are the Russians behind the Scotch in bravery, hospitality, and pride, while in their lesser virtues and vices, tastes and sentiments, they are almost identical. There is the same enthusiasm in the dance; the same love of song; the same craving after knowledge, where the dawn of instruction has once penetrated; the same love of effective and showy dress; the

same addiction to spirits and their own native diet ; the same prejudice in favour of old habits ; and, in the earlier stages of Russian institutions, the same forms of government. In short, these assimilative features might be traced to an almost interminable point, but which, in a cursory glance of this nature, it would be impossible to detail.

“ Of magic, cabala, and spells,
And every dark pursuit allied
To curious and presumptuous pride.”

With the Russians of old, as with the ancient Scotch, seers, prophets, and wizards, or wise men, were common, but in these enlightened days they have dwindled down into mere village fortune-tellers. Every little community, however, has its wise man or wise woman ; and expounders of dreams, and the mysteries of coffee-dregs and tea-leaves, as well as the more scientific readers of the “ Deevil’s buke,” are to be found in every Russian house ; for wonderful are the accomplishments of the Russian, as well as German, hand-maidens in this respect ; and, indeed, of some of their mistresses also.

A superstition in common with the Scotch, is the “ dead nip,” or pinch of malignant spirits ; this refers more particularly to the discoloured marks, like bruises, common to the shins and little plump calves of juveniles generally. The Scotch believe these marks to be “ nips ” or

pinches of wicked departed spirits; the Russians attribute them to the evil *dom-avoë*, or house-spirit.

The Russian *dom-avoës* are exceedingly entertaining in their reputed vagaries. They are not only implicitly believed in by the ignorant vulgar, but they have many devotees and propitiators among the educated and accomplished of the higher orders. These spirits are two in number, the good and the evil spirit; the former rules during the light, or day, the latter by night, or darkness. The good *dom-avoë* is described as being like a bear, and exceedingly handsome of his kind, and is very careful of his *chevelure*, which he always wears *à la mode*; while the evil spirit has the form of a man, with a closely-shaven crown, or having fine close hair, like that on a rat's tail: he is oftener encountered than the good one.

Before the departure of a family, he is said to make himself very busy, being heard by many of its members hard at work all night long, knocking in nails, cording up luggage, and doing all he can to hurry off the inmates. He is reported to have the power of counteracting the good done by his rival; he is by far the stronger of the two, and appears to be for ever on the *qui vive*, and the most spiteful rascal that it ever entered into the imagination to conceive. If any arrangement has

been made in the day, which does not meet with his approval, he is sure to be revenged. For instance, if a horse, recently purchased, should shortly after sicken or die, the servants tell you with the utmost gravity that the *dom-avoë* must have been displeased with the purchase, and therefore rode him to exhaustion in the night !

Seeing the German maid of a lady whom I was visiting looking pale and fatigued one morning, I asked her if she had been up all night.

"Yes, indeed I have," she replied, "for the *dom-avoë* tormented me the whole night through."

It appeared that, by way of change, instead of sleeping in her own room, she took up her cushions or large square down pillows, with which most of the maids here are provided,* and throwing them upon a satin-covered couch in the drawing-room, laid herself down to sleep, and just as she began to doze, she heard her name called so loud and suddenly that she started to her feet, and going to the bed-room door of her mistress, was about to open it and ask if she called, when it

* Domestic servants find themselves not only in bed, bedding, and bedstead, but in the entire furniture of their rooms, so that when a new servant arrives, a cart-load of furniture accompanies him or her. The more wealthy are the owners of handsome chests of mahogany drawers, excellent feather beds and downy pillows, and their holy pictures, encrusted with gold or silver, and gay ornaments of various kinds, which they set out with much care and pride on their drawer-tops.

occurred to her that it might be the *dom-avoë*; so she retraced her steps, and, flinging herself down, once more prepared to sleep. But a second time she heard herself called, and starting up, replied; again no answer. Feeling now certain that it was he, she determined to brave him out, and lay down for the third time; and a third time she was roused by hearing her name called, when, finding it impossible to sleep, and quite weary with the conflict, she “took up her bed and walked” to her own apartment, just about the time it was her custom to rise.

“It was your conscience, Malvina; you knew you were doing wrong,” I said to her, laughingly; “there is no such thing as a *dom-avoë*.”

“But how could my conscience call out my name?” she retorted, looking very grave, and shaking her head solemnly, adding, as she did so, “How dreadful that you do not believe in his power; depend upon it, he will punish you.”

The favourite Christian names of both sexes common in Russia are also the same as those in Scotland—such as Alexander, David, Peter, John, Matthew, Andrew, &c.; Barbara, Elizabeth, Catherine, Euphemia, &c.

Another custom in common is the pretty one, at Easter, of dying and rolling eggs, though the latter part of the practice belongs to the children—the usual faithful perpetuators of pretty old

customs—although from whom the practice is borrowed, it is difficult to find out.

Some say that the Saracens presented eggs to the crusaders, to propitiate them, and in order to render their offerings more acceptable, dyed them in brilliant colours. Why this ceremony should be performed during the Easter week, few are able to tell, and nothing satisfactory presents itself but the idea that it must be some heathen remnant of the adoration paid to the Saxon goddess Eostre, who was worshipped with peculiar *éclat* at this season, eggs being among the offerings by which she was propitiated; although even this is negatived by the fact that the custom is not observed in England, which was more peculiarly under Saxon influence.

Whatever its origin, the custom is a pretty one; and, as carried out in Russia, an extremely interesting one. Immense numbers of eggs, of every hue and shade—red and purple are the favourite colours both in Russia and in Scotland—may be purchased during the Easter week at every little shop and street corner. In that part of Scotland where I have been accustomed to the practice, the children appear to monopolize the amusement, which consists in rolling these dyed eggs—which are hard boiled—in the fields and “greens,” the object of all this rolling being to keep the eggs whole, or uncracked, as long as pos-

sible. In Russia the children roll eggs in the same way, but as the still cold weather prevents them getting out to the fields, pieces of carpet are laid down on the *parquet*, over which they bowl their eggs and have fine fun. But the sentiment of the custom here, lies in the exchange of these pretty little symbols. A lady of high rank will exchange an Easter egg with her maid; the *noblesse* exchange them with each other, and the lowest in the land do the same, embracing each other meanwhile, and exclaiming, as they do so, "Christ is risen," the response being, "He is risen, indeed." The egg appears to be the "arks" or bond of good fellowship between man and man on this joyous anniversary, which is accepted by most Christians as the type of man's resurrection from the trammels of the grave to the glories of Paradise; and in that warm grasp of the hand and fraternal salute, man, in his gross earthly nature, approaches nearer to that Paradise by the humility and charity thus evoked, and to that God whose chief attribute is love. Long live so fraternal a custom—a pictorial *souvenir*, easily understood by the ignorant adult and unsophisticated child, and thus perpetuating, by the simplest possible means, the most glorious result of the religious year.

CHAPTER XVI.

Horse-racing on the Neva—Race-course and Grand Stand at Tzarskoë-Celo—Bill of Fare for a Fast Dinner—Easter Midnight Mass—Greco-Russian Church—A Voluminous Spread—Valuable Eggs—The Easter Fair—The Nasledenick's Heir—The Attaman of the Cossacks—Ode of Borice Theodoroff.

ANOTHER of the Lenten amusements is horse-racing on the Neva, opposite the Winter Palace. Here there is a stand and double course railed off. The race-horse for this winter course draws a light sledge, constructed of cane; upon this sits the driver, a man of light weight, who guides his beautiful steed—which is permitted to retain all his natural graces of flowing tail and mane—holding a rein in each outstretched hand. Two rival horses enter the course from opposite directions—a paling dividing the course of

each—and make for the goal, which is situated equi-distant from both starting-points ; and he that passes it first, wins. Some of these race-horses are most magnificent creatures, and look to their very best advantage as they pace along, attached by almost invisible links to the elegant little vehicle that contains their driver. Betting is also becoming the fashion, even among the fair sex. One of our party lost a lock of hair, and another gained a dozen pairs of gloves ; few ladies, however, were among the spectators, the cold was so intense ; the majority seemed to belong to the interesting caftan-class and the well-behaved lower orders. According to English ideas of noise and numbers, these races were tame and spiritless ; a military man of our party computed the numbers present to be about 7,000 or 8,000, but in that region of immense space they looked scarcely as many hundreds. This is a very fair type of the miscalculations common to most English travellers in this country, who are so constantly comparing everything Russian with everything English, that their estimate of Russia can never be a fair one. We have no right to compare others with ourselves ; like the Jews, we are a “peculiar” people ; our very insulation of geographical position begets eccentricities, of which our egotism is the least justifiable, even to our own consciences. Like the hermit crab, we sit

alone on the rock, ever humming with self-gratulation :—

“There’s nae hoose like oor’s ;
There’s nae folk like oor ain folk.”

Compare Russia and her institutions even with the more liberal of her neighbours, and she stands out in bold relief beyond them all.

The most popular races with the higher ranks are those held annually near Tzarskoë-Celo. At that place there is a fine level race-course, the general plan of which somewhat resembles that at Epsom. It has also its grand-stand, with one of smaller dimensions for the accommodation of the Imperial family.

The very last week of Lent has at length arrived, and with it an increase of religious severities. Twice a-day, every member of a strict family attends church, where the service is more than ordinarily trying from the increased number of prayers, and consequent increase of prostrations and kneeling. Studies, and the few amusements permitted, are now entirely laid aside, and all the members of a family deliver themselves up to the most rigid observance of their religious duties, not breaking their fast until sun-set ; Friday, in this week, they fast entirely. During the forty days’ fast, no Russian has touched flesh, the poor living almost solely on black-bread, salt herrings, cucumbers, onions, mushrooms, tea, &c. ; some

only just keep life within them by means of a morsel of bread and salt, and a salt cucumber, from day to day, and that never eaten until after sunset. The bills of fare for the rich are of much the same ingredients, though more varied, and consist of mushrooms, fish, vegetables, &c., arranged somewhat after the following fashion, and which are not only palatable, but pleasing enough in appearance to satisfy even a *gourmand's* eye.

SOUP.

White cabbage and mushrooms chopped fine, and enriched with a minute portion of sun-flower oil, which is a most delicate extract.

PATTIES.

Of flour, with onion shred and baked in the centre, resembling tartlets.

FISH.

Smelts of the most delicious description, fried in vegetable oil, and eaten with lemon-juice.

Salmon, eaten with green peas.

CUTLETS.

Of minced mushrooms, flour, and potatoes, fried in refined vegetable oil. These are most delicate, and in appearance — and indeed in flavour — very much resemble lamb-cutlets fried in bread-crumbs.

SWEETS.

Tapioca, boiled with red wine.

Arrow-root, sweetened and mixed with the juice of the cranberry.

Towards the close of this week, numbers who had not partaken of the Sacrament in the early part of Lent prepare for that duty now. Good Friday is a day of severe fast—the devout poor abstaining even from the morsel of black-bread and the salt cucumber; and among the rich, invalids and children only are exempt from the entire fast of the day. There is also a trying church service; all are nearly exhausted, many being obliged to sustain nature by a few drops of wine occasionally. On the clergy, this prolonged duty and rigid fast fall with redoubled weight, and many suffer severely ere it is over. But it is now near an end, and the great National Festival of Russia—that momentous Easter Sabbath anniversary which is to bring glad tidings of Christ's resurrection to the expectant crowds assembled in the churches throughout the length and breadth of the land—has arrived.

At eleven o'clock on Saturday night, bare-headed and in white dresses, we all repaired to the fine old Church of St. Sergœ, where we were fortunate enough to procure standing-room within the altar-railing. This position being elevated a foot or two above the surrounding densely packed

multitude, afforded the most complete view over the whole building.

Few churches present so imposing and solemn an aspect, during the observance of the service, as that of the Greco-Russian. Here neither pews nor devotional-chairs* are permitted — no letting off portions of God's temple, like stalls at an opera-house; there is besides no distinction of persons; the prince and the beggar stand side-by-side; the moujik in his sheep-skin surtout, and the princess in her satin and velvet, kneel together before the altar.

Shortly before twelve o'clock on Saturday evening, the priests, clad in the sombre, sad-coloured vestments which they had worn during Lent, began the service by a slow and dirge-like chant. A few minutes before midnight, a procession of the clergy leaves the church, for the purpose, as it is understood, of visiting the tomb of the Saviour. One carries a huge cross; another the pure light of the word in a lantern affixed to a pole; after this follow framed pictures, descriptive of the life of Christ, borne aloft over the heads of the people. Having twice made the circuit of the

* The Russians cannot comprehend how Christians of other creeds dare to sit in the presence of God. A respected Russian priest, speaking on this subject, said, "If any of us go with a petition to the Tzar, shall we sit down in his presence? Certainly not. Then how is it possible to sit down in the presence of that King of Kings, before whom that Tzar bows the knee?"

edifice without, they returned, having in the meantime exchanged their dark robes for others of more radiant cloth of gold. Proceeding in grand procession up the centre of the church, they exclaim with a loud voice, "Christ is risen," to which the people respond, "He is risen indeed." The clocks are all striking twelve, the bells of all the churches in the city burst out in rejoicing peals, and the fortress guns fire a fête-day salvo. Every individual in the church having previously provided himself with a wax taper, these are now all lit up with magical rapidity, and friend salutes friend throughout the whole building, giving two kisses on one cheek, and one on the other, — and "Christ is risen" swells out in rejoicing accents from every mouth, while "He is risen indeed" rises in acquiescing melodious response above every other sound; and "He is risen indeed" is chanted, by the full choir, so divinely that it seems as if angels lying in wait had caught up the Holy theme and were bearing off the sacred text, over which earth's mortals rejoiced, to the immortals above, who, as they veiled their faces in the presence of the Almighty Everlasting in Heaven, also chanted "He is risen indeed."

Words could never adequately convey the effect of this holy scene. The brilliancy of this midnight rejoicing—its sincerity—its Christian love—in short, its religion, for however much

some may descant on such a scene operating on the senses, if the heart is reached through these media—and the most unsympathising can scarcely escape—surely a great triumph has been gained. The bare reflection that at this very moment upwards of fifty millions of Christians in Russia alone, were at one and the same time raising their voices to heaven, and in the same words acknowledging the anniversary of the Blessed one's triumph over death and the grave, was almost overpowering. However lax some may be in their devotional duties compared with others, there is not one member of the Greco-Russian Church who would omit this solemn service, except upon the direst necessity.

To the members of a church cut up into fragments by dissent, this grand unity is almost incomprehensible; and whatever the crabbed and illiberal sectarian may say to the contrary, the contemplation of such a scene as that just described is a grand one. Anniversary meetings such as these cannot fail to conduce to God's glory, in the expansion of the creature's heart, and its growth in those heavenly graces, "the chief of which is charity."

With the exception of the Church of Syria, the Greco-Russian is said to be the purest in its ritual. The Greco-Russian Church accepts the Athanasian and Nicene creeds as its standard of

faith. It admits seven Sacraments, viz., baptism by immersion, baptismal unction, ordination, confession, the Lord's supper, marriage, and extreme unction. It rejects the dogma of purgatory ; yet it allows prayers for the dead. It forbids graven images ; yet it permits pictures, though it maintains that such pictures are not intended as objects of worship, but merely, like the portraits of cherished friends, are looked at to recall more vividly to the mind their good qualities as an example worthy to be followed. In the Greco-Russian Church, from its earliest foundation, the life of Christ, and Bible History generally, have been taught by means of pictures, and these still adorn the walls and pillars of almost every church in the empire. Nothing is more common than to see one moujik instructing the other by means of these pictures, as modern children, in Western Europe, teach each other Bible history from a series of pictures which, in ordinary cases, outrage the rules of design, colour, and common sense far more than do the very oldest pictures in the oldest churches of the far east of Russia.

The Greco-Russian Church ignores all dispensations and indulgences. Nor, in any of its institutions, has it the slightest approach in this respect to the Church of Rome. It permits invocations of the saints and of the Virgin Mary. But the school catechisms contain clauses strictly

prohibitive of undue veneration being paid either to the relics of the saints or to images, *i.e.*, pictures which are so called. Fasts, ordered by the Church, are most strict, and are rigidly observed, nearly one half of the year being spent in fasting. Little wonder then that with this, in conjunction with their frequent use of the vapour-bath, the physical stamina of the Russian is defective. It could scarcely be otherwise under such reducing influences, and one only feels the more surprised at the appearance of some of the fine handsome men encountered in the streets of the capital, and wonders how they grew up out of such a state of things. One natural element of their country however favours them, and that is the fine, light, dry air of the delightful summer, and the bracing cold of their really enjoyable winter; an exception, however, must be taken to the climate of the whole government of St. Petersburg, which, from its situation, is so variable that one day it may be twenty degrees of frost, and the next not one.

Previously to confession, the Russians ask forgiveness of one another, and this is a custom which descends from the Tzar to the lowest in the empire, extending even to the foreigners by whom they are surrounded. After the midnight service, prayers and chanting continue in some churches until four in the morning, when the devotees return

home fatigued to the last degree, to sleep several hours later than usual, when they rise to a voluminous "spread," to such a one as they have not looked upon for the previous forty days at least; reminding the stranger, if perchance it may have been forgotten, that long dreary Lent, with all its exactions, is now among the "by-gones."

The chief attraction on the breakfast-table, on this auspicious morning, is a lamb couchant, made of butter, frizzled and curled all over, and provided with remarkably brilliant black eyes composed of currants. This was the handiwork of that native genius, Alexie, and the whole affair—being formed with his knife only—was highly creditable to his artistic capacity. Next to this was a peculiarly Easter comestible, called "Kazan," from the government in which it is made; in appearance it resembles a sugar-loaf, and is composed of rich curd, encrusted with a most delicious paste. But the predominating wonder on the table, and which occupied the largest portion of it, was a curious arrangement of bread kind, called a "cringle," a *fête* cake, which, in its pristine state, must have been a roll of dough two or three yards long, and in circumference about the size of a child's arm; this is twisted in and out, and round about, like a true love-knot, and baked a beautiful brown. These, with a great variety of other viands, interspersed

with a number of gaily coloured eggs, had been blessed by the priest in the church at midnight, having been carried there a couple of hours before.

Eggs are universal, of all kinds and sizes, from the common hen's egg, dyed red and purple, to the most elegant devices in sugar, china, or gems. The rich present the most costly and artistic offerings to each other at this season, disguised under the form of an egg. Some of these are exquisite arrangements, the outer shell being of mother of pearl, gold, or silver, enclosing a set of gold implements, studded with gems, for the work-table; others golden or enamelled eggs, on which is beautifully designed the head of some favorite saint or king; this opens, and displays all manner of charms, among which are golden casques, drums, spurs, bronze boots, &c., while some of the prettiest fantasies are egg-shaped *corbeilles*, full of flowers or bonbons.

The Russians call Easter "Pasha," a Hebrew word, signifying "passage," which applies to the Jewish feast of the passover. On Easter Monday, and two following days, the Russian ladies receive their relatives and intimate acquaintances of the other sex.

Now follows another week of Carnival, even more delirious in its demonstrations than that of the Carnival proper, which held its brief reign before Lent. Once more the gay votaries

of mirth are in the ascendant. Among the lower orders, the influence of spirits is again visible, and reeling peasants are among the commonest features of the capital. But this is not so much the result of excess, as one unacquainted with Russian habits might at first suppose, for a very small quantity of Russian vodka—which is fiery as the raw-grained Irish whisky—affects men, reduced by long fasting to almost infantine weakness.

Once more the swings and “merry grounds,” clowns, fire-eaters, gingerbread-nut stalls, ice-hills, and theatricals, appear to have sprung up on the Grande Place, like mushrooms in a night, and are thronged with the holiday million, who take all these amusements, provided for their use, with a certain Turk-like gravity which generally evokes a smile from the stranger; for, after all, it is sufficiently droll to behold these sage-like moujics in beards, sheep-skins, and jack-boots, astride on legless, tailless horses, circulating round and round, and looking from their elevation more solemnly grave than ever; the only loquacious mortal among them being the clown whipper-in. Some, seated *vis-à-vis* in cabin-berth-like arrangements, look out from beneath the chintz frills and drapery, with the most remarkable seriousness of countenance. Others occupy swings, and not a few are engaged on the ice-hills, gliding swiftly down, or tumbling over each other

at the bottom, but everywhere with the same quiet gravity. Except for the little round women—the sex are the same all over the world—loquacious and dimpled-cheeked, who show their white teeth at every word, the Fair would present but few of the usual concomitants of such places, viz., bustle and noise, for their lords remind one of a number of Grecian sages, who, determined to taste once more the pleasures of their boyhood, had taken possession of their children's playthings.

Another week of these Fair amusements, and an extra dram, and the lower orders have done with holidays for a season; but the merry-go-round of the *noblesse* still circulates on—on—on—for ever.

It was after a visit to the Grande Place, one beautiful bright morning, that, returning by the Imperial quay, a lady passed on before us, accompanied by a handsome little boy, apparently about seven or eight years of age, and followed by a footman in a long scarlet coat. The picturesque, and at the same time comfortable, handsome dress of the little fellow, arrested our attention, for the little form was arrayed in a full short surtout of claret-coloured velvet, lined and turned up with sable; a little cap of the same material, bound with the same fur, and loose trousers to match, which were stuffed into little boots with red tops. A train of carts, placed upon sledges, each drawn

by one horse, and laden with bales of cotton, was slowly toiling along, rather near the sloping side of the quay, which a high wind on the previous day had rendered smooth and transparent as glass. Several of the cavalcade had already passed by, when one, getting out of the line of procession, slipped upon this more glassy part of the road, and all the efforts of the horse to regain safer ground were unavailing. Away slid the sledge, till stopped by the loose snow at the edge of the curb, dragging the unwilling horse after it. The poor animal—one of the sagacious native horses—tugged and strained, and did his very utmost to regain the middle of the road, but in vain, the weight of the cart, seated as it was upon the slippery skate-like sledge-irons, counteracted the momentary advantage he now and then gained, and away it went again. The driver, in a rage, approached and struck the willing beast a blow across the back with a stick. In a moment, the little feet before us stayed their pit-a-pat, and the tall footman stayed his; but the lady in velvet and brocade swept on, heedless of the interesting scene enacting behind her.

Another blow, and another, rattled across the animal's back, and now the little feet approached close to the edge of the pavement, and that little velvet-sleeved arm, with its sable cuff and small clenched hand, uprose in threatening atti-

tude, and a tiny exclamation escaped him as the small foot stamped on the pavement. The driver, looking up for the first time at his assistant, caught sight of the scarlet livery, and touched his hat. Intuitively the peasant seemed to understand the meaning of the child, for, hastening round to the back of the cart, he put his shoulder to the side of it, and between them—the horse and he—they easily succeeded in surmounting the difficulty. When they were fairly off after the others, the little feet resumed their walk, and the pit-a-pat resounded on the pavement with renewed vigour as they hastened to rejoin the before-mentioned lady, who, turning hastily round a moment before, had for the first time missed the noble child from her side. How much character had displayed itself in that brief moment, while she slowly pursued her walk, even unconscious of his absence!

A little crowd of strolling idlers like ourselves had, however, taken note of all, and of one standing near we ventured to inquire if he, happened to know who the little hero might be, whose noble, resolute, manly act had so prepossessed the beholder. The crafty tradesman thus addressed, raising his cap, made the customary low bow, and proud to afford us the information required, replied:—

“That is Nicholas, the son of Alexander, the

heir of our heir, and the future Imperatorsky of Russia—please God to spare him.”

We often met the little Grand Duke afterwards, accompanied by this same lady-nurse and his footman, and as the bright eyes of this miniature Peter the Great met ours, we involuntarily breathed a prayer on that handsome little face, for its noble heart's sake.

This heir in perspective enjoys, among other titles, that of Attaman of the Cossacks, his father being the first of the present reigning family so called, and which event is celebrated in the following ode, translated from the Russian of Borice Theodoroff by Barrow, author of “The Bible in Spain,” and entitled :—

THE GLORY OF THE COSSACKS.

1.	E'en as rush
Quiet Don !	Down midst rocks
Azure Don !	Eagle flocks.
Who dost glide	
Deep and wide.	3.
To the proud	Silent Don !
Cossack crowd	Azure Don !
Drink which cheers,	Sport and play,
Path which bears.	Shine forth gay ;
2.	Gift most rare—
Light, I wot,	Alexander
Hands they've not ;	Russia's heir,
Down they ply	To thy clan
Thunderingly,	Given is for
Foes to crush,	Attaman.

4.

Quiet Don!
 Azure Don!
 Glory be
 To thy sons,
 Cossack free
 Warrior ones;
 The world mute
 Of their deeds
 Hear the bruit—
 Wide it spreads.

5.

Silent Don!
 Azure Don!
 Praise to their
 Deeds so fair;
 Fain our bright

Tzar requite,
 Would each one
 Knew it might
 Scarce be done
 Gave his son.

6.

Joys now every Cossack man,
 Joys the Black Sea's every
 stan,*
 And Ural
 Flings its spray,
 Roars withal
 Night and day
 Joy to Cossacks—joy and free,
 To each hero—regiment be,
 Given is an
 Attaman.

* Cossack village.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Catherine Institution—La Belle Sortie—Young Ladies in Uniform—Sortie Examinations—Helene de V—
—The Stealers of the Emperor's Plume—Dames de Classe—The Tzar and the Polish Girls of Warsaw—
The Iron Duke of Russia—Elèves of the Institution and their "Passions."

THE Catherine Institution is one of the numerous educational establishments, founded by the Empress Catherine, for the training of the daughters of the nobility. She spent much of her time here, superintending, and even teaching, the children herself, examining them, and awarding the prizes. Girls are entered as early as three years of age, and remain until seventeen. There is a church and extensive garden and playgrounds attached to the building, which is a plain, sub-

stantial, and spacious one. In addition to these, there is a country residence belonging to it, situated several miles out of town, whither the children repair in May, and pursue their studies until the fall. One of the principal rules of the Institution is, that from the time a pupil enters until her *sortie*, she shall not quit the bounds of the establishment on any plea whatever—that of ill-health alone excepted—so that many make a pretty frequent use of this convenient loop-hole. Like those of similar institutions on the Continent, the young ladies wear a peculiar dress, not unlike that worn in some of our English charity schools. The school is divided into two distinct classes, viz., those working up, and those finishing off. The winter dress of the younger pupils is a green merino frock, made low, and with short sleeves, over which is worn a fine white cambric apron and boddice in one, and long white cambric sleeves, fitting tight to the arm. The elder pupils wear dresses of brown merino, which is the only distinction. The summer dress is white.

Relatives may visit the pupils when they please; and on Sundays the young ladies are at liberty to receive their lady acquaintances, and such relatives of the other sex as by law they are interdicted from marrying; the prohibition consequently extends to first cousins. But this rule is constantly evaded, and many a gay cavalier presents

himself under the protective title of cousin, who is no relation whatever, and often the bearer of his own *billets-doux*, carefully concealed in a basket of fruit, flowers, or bonbons. A regular correspondence is maintained in this way, and even books smuggled in, notwithstanding the utmost vigilance of the lady directress and her staff of *dames de classe*, in whose presence the young ladies receive their visitors.

There are at present 500 pupils in the Institution, many of whom are orphans who have received their presentations from the Empress, and are thus provided with a first-rate education. Easter is the season for the *sortie* of finished pupils, and previously to the reception of a *débutante* at the home of her parents and friends, an apartment is prepared for her with much solicitude. The plenishing of this room, which is usually a demi-bedroom, is of the most elegant description, the furniture being generally covered with light-coloured satin brocade, or velvet; the entire contents of this apartment are usually the gifts of friends, and not unfrequently, if the *débutante* belongs to a family which has in any way distinguished itself, or if the young lady has evoked the interest of the Empress, Her Majesty casts in her presents with the rest. The reigning Empress is considered the "mother" of the Institution. Should any of the pupils become betrothed

before they leave the school, at their *sortie* the Empress gives them her blessing.

Several very pretty girls are expected to make their *sortie* this Easter, but never in the annals of the Institution have so many handsome *débutantes* made their *sortie* together, as at one, for this reason, called "La belle Sortie," which took place about the commencement of the reign of Nicholas I. I have seen several members of this famous *sortie*, who, although now matrons, surrounded by grown-up sons and daughters, bear agreeable traces of their former good looks. With one of these ladies, whose eldest daughter was to take leave of the Catherine Institution at the approaching Easter, it was my good fortune to pay a visit to this interesting school during the examinations, when the parents and relatives of the pupils are usually the only assistants. On our arrival we were introduced into a *salon*, handsomely decorated with noble pillars, and quite as large as the hall-room at the Hanover Square Rooms; one-half of this was "roped off" for the use of the visitors, the other for the pupils; in this latter portion of the hall stood several grand pianofortes and harps.

Having "a friend at court" in the person of the Lady Directress, *une dame noble, d'une grande présence*, we obtained front seats. Immediately after taking possession of them, in walked three of

the *débutantes* ; two seated themselves at two different pianos, and one at a harp, while a large orchestra of male performers, placed at the back of the *salon*, accompanied them through several of Beethoven's most difficult compositions, which they performed to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned, and doubtless every Russian lady there present was a practical judge of what she heard.

Three other younger pupils succeeded, then two, and finally one, all of whom performed very difficult studies in a really artistic style. After these came a little girl, who, in her very childish uniform, conveyed the idea that she might be about twelve or thirteen years of age. Walking towards the company, a little in advance of the instruments, she dropped a gracefully prolonged courtesy, and clearing her little throat, opened a scroll of manuscript music, which she held, concert-singer fashion, in her hand, and sang therefrom a simple German air most divinely, a group of her schoolfellows behind joining in angel-like chorus.

A number of others succeeded, whose performance, I thought, would have been infinitely more interesting if accompanied only by their schoolfellows. But my companion assured me that this obligato accompaniment of fiddles, flutes, violoncellos, and cornets, was absolutely necessary to encourage the young ladies, and embolden them

to perform before strangers with that ease so difficult of acquisition, and without which the most talented are at a discount. “*Par exemple,*” continued the lively Madame de V——, there is my Hèlene, she makes her *sortie* next week; already I have accepted engagements for *tableaux vivants* at Madame B——’s, in which she is to personate three different characters; private theatricals at the Countess Y——’s; and a concert at Marie Petrovna’s, where she is to perform a study of De Witt’s; and, with her natural diffidence, I am quite sure, had she been educated at home, and unaccustomed to the presence of numbers, she would never have acquired confidence to execute the simplest *chansonnette*, even before her brothers. Madame de V—— may be right; certainly the ease—without any approach to boldness or conceit—with which these very interesting girls accomplished their respective exercises, was highly gratifying, and though many of them looked pale, and one felt that they must have worked very hard, yet their labour seemed to please them, for more than one expressed to me, that day, her regret that the *sortie* was so near, having no inclination to leave the Institution, where they had spent so many happy years, and be separated—perhaps for ever—from those who had grown up with them from infancy to womanhood. This consideration appears to weigh heavily upon

all, for as the parents and relatives of the pupils are constantly in communication with them, that finest sympathy of our nature, viz., the love of parent and child, is not only not severed, but actually strengthened, by the limited nature of their communion during a few years' *séjour* in one of these schools. Indeed, I have known children who, before they had left home, had never shown any marked affection for their parents and other relatives, who, after a short absence in the Institution, always received them with outstretched arms, and tears of joy in their eyes ; therefore, whatever may be the future gain by a return to their relatives, there is a very present loss in the dispersion of the sisterhood *sortante*, though many of them are so situated in after life as to be able to continue to its close that love and affection which germinated in their young hearts while under the fostering roof of this and similar valuable institutions.

Thus was Hèlene de Y—— deep in engagements ere she had yet made her *début* in the gay world ; and just as I was beginning to wonder what she was like, and if she was a consenting party to all these gaieties in perspective, entered into with so much zest by her lively mother, a tall, thin, lady-like girl, with small, but interesting, features, made her appearance in the back ground ; and circulating through the crowd of instruments, advanced, as her predecessors had done,

to the front, but with timid, retiring step and downcast look. She seemed to feel that she would rather have been anywhere else in the world than there just at that moment, and was evidently greatly relieved by the arrival of a plump, pert, robin-red-breast-like young lady, with large brown eyes, rosy cheeks, and a very full throat.

“*Voilà, voilà ma fille!* Ah, what a pity she is so timid!” said the fashionable mother, who began to oscillate her pretty head — as the custom is, when pettily annoyed — at the faint flush which suffused the pale cheek of her daughter.

“And for that reason I find her charming,” I interposed.

My companion smiled, evidently propitiated, and as the gentle Hèlene raised her eyes for the first time since her *entrée*, she encountered the smiling face of her mother, which doubtless had its due effect on the sympathetic daughter. Hèlene and her friend now commenced their vocal duet. Those young, almost childish voices, now swelling out with the intensity of passion and expression, now languishing, now bold and energetic, or modulated to the most flute-like symphony, fell upon the ear with the startling distinctness of heart-felt experience. It was a wonderful execution for creatures so young; and even here,

among a people accustomed to comparative perfection in accomplishments, was marked, by the universal murmur of applause which followed, as something extraordinary. Now, instead of oscillating from side to side, the plume-decked head of Madame de V—— moved in an opposite direction, as it gracefully replied to the congratulatory bows which met her from surrounding acquaintance; and the proud mother's heart rose to her lips and eyes, as she whispered through her tears, "Dieu te béni mon enfant!"

Others succeeded this talented pair, who sang and played many beautiful compositions in Italian, German, and Russ, but none to equal the performance of the modest Hèlene and her stanch little second.

After the musical essays, came those of the dance; the graver fundamentals of reading, writing, geography, caligraphy, and their proficiency as linguists, having been tested more privately by their respective teachers of each branch. The elder pupils performed various *contredances*, waltzes, polkas, polka-mazurkas, &c., in perfect time, and with considerable grace. But the grand finale was a kind of allegorical figure-dance, with scarfs and flowers, and thoroughly delightful of its kind. In this the younger sisterhood were introduced. Some of them, little things of three and four years old, and

all carrying a full-blown white rose,* surrounded by innumerable buds.

This little ballet very graphically represented the delight of the elder sisters at the arrival of the little ones among them. Their sisterly affection was depicted in a variety of pretty fantasies, such as the elder pupils looping their scarfs in a fantastic ring, and encircling the younger, who, joining those hands containing the *bouquets*, thus formed one huge bunch of roses and rose-buds. Then again, the leave-taking, and the last *pas* and scene, when the elders, in trios, skip off with one of the younger, whom they enframe within their scarfs and wreaths, so as to represent pictures set in old-fashioned oval frames, hiding themselves behind.

The dancing having terminated, the pupils withdrew; and the company were then conducted into another spacious *salle*, the walls and tables of which were literally covered with the handiwork of these noble *élèves*. Some of the pencil-drawings, oil and water-colour paintings, were beautiful. The various specimens of needlework, of all kinds, from the plainest to the most elaborately fanciful, were thoroughly exquisite. A piece of drapery for the Empress attracted particular attention, as being not only beautiful,

* The white rose is the favourite and emblematic flower of the Empress Alexandra.

but unique, and consisted of alternate stripes of cashmere and velvet, the stripe of cashmere being ornamented with a rich Persian design, formed of small pieces of different coloured velvets, inlaid, as well as onlaid. A table-cover, wrought in the same way on cloth of gold, presented a gorgeous effect. Two superb carpets, one the work of the elder pupils alone, the other by the whole school, looked magnificent, as they hung suspended on the walls. A *sachet*, embroidered in chenilles and beads on white satin, and slippers to match, were also intended for the Tzaritza.

The items of feminine ingenuity, so perfect in their execution, were positively endless in detail; the most prominent only, or those nearest, attracting the attention of the ever-moving crowd. The eye now resting upon a *corbeille* of tastefully-made paper flowers; now upon a child's frock, embroidered and inset with lace; now upon fire or reading-screens, beautifully tinted with brush or needle; and now upon cushions, *sachets*, footstools, chair-covers, &c., without end.

The Empress, accompanied by the Imperial family, visits this *salle* and all make their selections. Her Majesty, on taking leave of her *débutantes* children, distributes gold and silver medals; and to the most deserving a bracelet of diamonds. Of late years, the Empress has not attended the Institution so much as of yore; but to make up

for it the Tzar pays them more attention, though he complains that every visit costs him a new plume. He generally carries his cocked hat behind him when in the same apartment with ladies, and on the occasion of a visit to the Institute, the more daring of these *filles nobles* adroitly manage to arrest his attention, while a dense crowd surrounds him and covers the retreat of others, who steal feather by feather of His Majesty's plume, until positively nothing remains but a few stubble-like ends! These feathers are preserved as cherished treasures, and many a one, thus obtained, occupies the highest place among jewels and costly bagatelles under their glass preserves.

The Catherine Institution—and all the other educational establishments on the same model—is presided over by a Lady Directress, generally of high rank, in most instances the widow of a general officer, whose greatest recommendation for this position of honour is amiability of disposition, with firmness and kindness of manner. The Lady Directress is chosen by the Empress. Subject to this head are the *dames de classe*; a certain number constantly circulate about among the pupils, of whom, while on duty, it is supposed they never lose sight. Many of these *dames de classe* are the daughters of clerks—nobles of the lowest grade—and

have themselves probably been educated by the Crown, and are thus provided for through life, for after a certain number of years' duty in the Institution, they are pensioned off. But many an orphan daughter of officers of superior rank is glad to avail herself of so honourable a post. Each is provided with her own separate apartment in the Institution, fire, light, and so much for board, attendance, and her wardrobe, with three days in the week at her own disposal; for here, as at the Winter Palace, and in the time of the serf, the same system is remarkable, three days on duty, or *de jure*, and three days free. On these free days, the *dames de classe* teach families in the city, and so add considerably to their incomes, many of them supporting aged or necessitous relatives. One of these, an interesting and learned Polish lady, who had received her education in one of the public institutions at Warsaw, founded by the Emperor Nicholas, most graphically described to me her own and schoolfellows' introduction to the Tzar through his picture, which was sent to the girls' Institute at Warsaw soon after its inauguration. A full-length representation of the founders of these establishments usually adorns the principal rooms of all such, and the *élèves* of the one at Warsaw had long looked in vain for that of their founder, which had been promised them.

The arrival of this picture was anticipated as a grand event even by the youngest pupil, and many a surmise as to the Tzar's personal appearance had filled the minds and mouths of the more imaginative; some had painted him with black hair, others with red, and some with grey; and with eyes of all colours and shades, from Circasian jet to ethereal blue; but as to expression, form, or dimension, these had never entered into the imaginings of any.

At length the picture, in its wooden case, arrived, and soon after it was fixed up at the end of their grand *salle*, and the time of its inauguration—which was to be marked by a kind of ceremony—announced to the children. The day at length arrived when they were to be introduced to the effigy of their benefactor. Already, five hundred expectant little countenances gazed earnestly in one direction, and every eye rested on the crimson curtain which covered the picture in its superb frame; this drapery being slowly drawn aside disclosed the splendid Tzar, in his full uniform of Field Marshal, with his cocked hat in hand, as if bowing to the pretty crowd so earnestly gazing upon him. For a moment the children,—not Russians of the Greco-Russian faith, but Roman Catholic Poles—regarded it in silent amazement; the next, they dropped *en masse* upon their knees before it.

“Certainly this was no prescribed part of the ceremony,” added my informant ;* the act was so involuntary, that had the Emperor himself, and all the priests in Poland, been present, we could not have helped it; for none of us had ever imagined such perfect grandeur and beauty in man.”

Leaving this elegant emporium of industry, we retraced our steps through the *salon* — in which the musical examinations had been held — and here a handsome general officer, wearing large moustaches, and in feature resembling the Tzar, approached Madame de V—— and shaking hands, congratulated her on the success of her daughter; adding something in Russ, uttered in a quick, laconic, but courteous tone, he bowed, and passed on. This was the Tzar’s only remaining brother, the Commander-in-chief, the “Iron Duke” of the North.

We now took our way through a region of stone-passages, all—as is usual in every house—agreeably heated, towards a part of the building where Helene and her companions were likely to

* This lady is now the respected instructress of the children of a celebrated self-expatriated Princess, who prefers life as an exile in Siberia with her husband, to any other life without him. The lady in question describes life in Siberia as not only comfortable and agreeable, but refined and elegant; they enjoy every necessary, the luxuries of the East and West, and delightful society.

be found, and where, in an extensive open hall, into which numerous passages converged, we found the object of our search, one of a group surrounding their *dame de classe*, who appeared to be relating something which interested them. Finding that several of the little party were younger sisters of friends of mine, we were all well acquainted in a few minutes, and I found myself walking up and down—after the usual fashion—in the great *salle*, surrounded by these sociable and intelligent girls, who had a thousand inquiries to make; that universally interesting subject to school-girls, another's school-days, being the theme of our conversation, one asking if Queen Victoria ever visited my institute? Another, what prize I had carried off?

Under the calmest exterior there lurks a great deal of dry humour and shrewd observation among these *demoiselles*. Most of them have what each one terms "*ma passion*," which is a kind of Quixotic conception, either entirely imaginary, or concentrated in one of the masters, or if they should be all engaged, in one of themselves. This "passion" is the ideal "but" of all their superabundant nonsense, and the media employed, one or more of their class-fellows. The most amusing phase of this pastime is, that while every *élève* knows who is her neighbour's "passion," the innocent "passion" himself, herself, or itself, is

seldom cognisant of the honour so conferred. There is danger, however, in this amusement, for many of them identify themselves as completely with their "passions" as Don Quixote did with his, and therefore the mischief, to highly imaginative temperaments, may be conceived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

May-Day—The Russian “Longchamps”—Dress of Tradesmen of the Old School and of the New—A Visit to the Governor of St. Petersburg—The “Whittington” of the North—Agreeable termination of the May-day Fête.

“The flow’ry May, who from her green lap throws
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.”

To the Easter *fêtes* succeed those of the Whitsun-week, and that of Trinity Sunday, which is a perfect floral treat, the churches being decorated with flowers, and every lady carrying a bouquet.

And then comes May-day, for the Peterburghers have their May-day observances as well as the cockneys, although in these northern regions the *fête* belongs more particularly to the higher classes; it is something *distingué*, being nearly allied to that of the famous Parisian “Longchamps.”

The Russians, like the Germans, welcome the outbursting green on tree and shrub, with an enthusiasm and delight quite—as a national feature—unknown to us in Britain. Among the peasants, one of the most picturesque dances is a welcome to the new-born Spring, when each devotee is gaily “busked” in sprigs of green.

The spring *fête* in the northern capital is probably an adaptation from this poetic nationality, and was instituted by Peter, being another of those progressive movements in furtherance of the emancipation of the Russian women from their Greek-like seclusion.

This “walk of ceremony,” as it is called, is still kept up with considerable spirit, but nothing like what it ought to be, considering its founder and his motive.

A few versts out of the city is the pretty suburb of Ekaterinoff, where is a colony of ornamental summer villas—a Vauxhall—and several substantial-looking houses seated in their own grounds, the permanent residences of British merchants, manufacturers, &c. The road hither from the city runs through a picturesque *locale* fringed with the drooping foliage of the elegant lady-birch, mingled with those of young firs, elms, lindens, &c., and is altogether one of the prettiest places in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Petersburg.

On the first of May—old style—every inhabitant of the city who can command the use of a vehicle, takes a place in this *promenade en équipage*, which winds its way towards the pretty Ekaterinoff. Here may be seen every variety of turn-out, from that of the Tzar to the cart of the peasant, though the last mentioned are “few and far between,” yet in Russia, as in France, the public walks and drives are as open to the use of one class of society as of the other; and I very much doubt if exclusive drives, like those round our London parks, could exist in Russia, as to a certainty they could not in France.

Once arrived at Ekaterinoff, the company, *en équipage*, circulate slowly, almost at a foot pace, round and round, and in and out, among the different avenues and roads; listening to the superlative music of several military bands; and inhaling the fresh air laden with the frankincense emitted from opening bud and blossom.

Usually, at this season, the leaves on the trees are fully expanded; but if the winter has been a late one, the trees are merely tinged with colour. This is a great disappointment, for the rich yellow-green of a bursting Russian spring's young foliage lends a great charm to the *fête*—a charm which only those accustomed to a climate of extremes can fully appreciate.

Most people put on something new for the

occasion, and as the proverbially good taste of the Russian ladies turns them out in the perfection of toilette, there is always something to repay the gaze of the masses, and therefore, long before the time at which the first visitors are expected to pass, every window on the line of route is filled with gaily-dressed ladies and children, while every door-step, every eligible height, and the top of every garden-wall is occupied with spectators; reminding one of the assistants on the line of march to Epsom on the Derby-day.

Towards four o'clock the arrivals grow numerous, and every variety of vehicle in ordinary use, either in Russia or the further West, may be seen flying or shuffling, as the case may be, in a giddy race to the goal. The ponderous, gloomy-looking, but easily swung and very comfortable family coaches-and-four, are seen here to their best advantage, as the broad-chested Tartar coachmen in their knowing, low-crowned, little beavers—their summer hats—and tiny postilion in costume to match, hie onwards, bearing their freights of great ladies resplendent in bright eyes, and surrounded by every becoming attribute of tulle gossamer and superfine flower. To these succeeds the humbler, but not less comfortable and interesting barouche of the Russian koupetz, or tradesman. In the place of honour reclines a duenna, grave and substantial in appearance, and

enveloped in a brown silk or satin "salôp," or mantle; her head-piece is carefully and neatly wrapped up in a brown or black silk kerchief, so as to conceal every hair beneath its folds, the only bright lights relieving that solemn consideration being a pair of gold ear-pendants, or more frequently large solid rings. Her spouse sits by her side, looking equally grave, his blue cloth caftan enveloping in loose folds his portly person. A noble beard, of Aaron-like amplitude, covers his chest, while a broad-brimmed beaver rests upon his crown. A young couple occupy the opposite seats of the carriage; they are dressed in the very extreme of the mode; the lady, who is young and probably good-looking, wears a real "love of a bonnet," of pink crape, garnished with *marabouts* and a little elegant *visite*; while the gentleman, also young and nice-looking, is minus beard, whiskers, and moustache, appears extremely *comme il faut*, and wears inimitable light-coloured gloves. Who are these two couples, the very antipodes of one another? the stranger inquires. Is that elderly dame the nurse of the young lady, and that greybeard the Mentor of that beardless Telemachus?

"Oh! no, no, no!" laughs the friend of whom the enquiry has been made. "The elders are the parents of the younger; the former belong to the old school, when beards, and caftans, and kerchief-

covered heads were the order of the day, and they could not if they would, have worn any other, for these distinctions belonged to their class, being ignoble." These restrictions as to dress are now removed, but the old people retain their accustomed garb from habit, while the young, privileged to wear what they please, go to the utmost extremes, and often far out-dress the high and wealthy *noblesse*.

Other well-appointed carriages bear onwards younger pupils of this same old school, accompanied by their younger children, their nurses, or their governesses. The infants and children look like elegant importations from the Champs Elysées, their nurses—not unfrequently English—wearing bonnets, while "Madame" wears none.

And, hobbling up after this substantial "turn-out," comes a rusty, dusty, and rickety old *calèche*, probably hired for the job. Its occupants are two meagre middle-aged ladies, dressed young and showily. The old vehicle plunges dreadfully, bearing to one particular side at every step, like an inebriated mortal, threatening to blunder on the top of everyone it encounters; but the ladies look complaisant, as does also their tall footman, a tall fair-haired Fin, in faded livery, and with cocked hat stuck jauntily on one side; he is mounted on an awkwardly-high footboard, and

clings with tenacious clutch to the head of the *calèche*, for the holders have long been absent.

Ever and anon an English tilbury, or dog-cart, rushes past, but their docked and blinkered horses, dressed in heavy harness, look to little advantage near the light and graceful trappings of the Russian droschkii and *calèche* horses, which, with flowing tails that almost sweep the ground, and wavy manes, and free wandering gaze, present a dashing contrast.

Having now reached Ekaterinoff, the company take it more leisurely, moving at snail's pace up and down, and in and out, forming figures of eight, or triangles, among the diversified allées, but all in the most perfect order, for there is the handsome Grand Master of Police, with his imposing-looking staff of mounted *gendarmes*; and the military Governor of St. Petersburg is also there with his staff, all in readiness to receive the Imperial family, or any member of it, who may grace the *fête*.

After bowing one's head nearly giddy, and smiling till the muscles ache, and staring till the eyes grow tired—for everybody meets everybody here—the company begin to think of retracing their steps to town. The bands of the Guards give their grand inspiring *finale*, *Boja Tzara Chranie*, or God preserve the Emperor. Away roll the *grandees*, who hurry off out of the vulgar

crush. The lesser magnates follow, while the only remnants left of the gay scene, a few minutes later, are two or three groups of straggling pedestrians, and the empty carriages of such as are fortunate enough to have acquaintances among the inhabitants of the villas *ornées*, or the substantial abodes before-mentioned, where entertainments on a generous scale are provided for the city friends of their owners, on this merry May day.

Among others, our party was thus fortunate. Having taken our promenade in the ranks with the rest, and nodded, and smiled, and stared till we were tired; after stopping, and progressing, and stopping again, getting out of the line, and into it; having been called to order by the police, and, finally, making a desperate rush through every obstacle, we alighted at a little rustic gate, and ascended a broad flight of steps, belonging to a pretty villa, having as balustrades a succession of carved-stone baskets, full of hot-house plants in full bloom, till a glass door stopped our further progress. This was opened by a soldier from within, and the party entered a little vestibule, into which, from a door at the opposite end of it, emerged a fine-looking man, of sixty and upwards, having a benign, open air, and an honest expression of countenance. He wore a military uniform, his heavy epaulette pronouncing him to

be a General. He received us with most hospitable welcome, and leading the way through several apartments, introduced us into one where a large party of ladies, children, and military officers were assembled. To these we were introduced by our host, the courteous military Governor of St. Petersburg, who, thoughtful of the comfort of his friends, had ordered all necessities—even to furniture—from the city for this occasion; the little cottage *ornée* being a mere summer bower, in which scarcely more than tables and chairs was ordinarily left during the winter. Here we partook of tea and chocolate; and here, among several other great Russian celebrities—military men—was one who particularly arrested my attention. He was the only civilian in the company, and occupied the seat at table next to our host, by whom he appeared to be held in friendly esteem; this was J off, the “Whittington” of these realms; “thrice Lord Mayor” of Imperial Petersburg, and the very man I had, before even entering Russia, been most desirous of seeing, after the Emperor Nicholas.

“And that is J off,” I involuntarily exclaimed, as one of my friends repeated his name to me in an undertone; I was not disappointed, no one could have been, in that round, ruddy, cheerful face, lighted up with intelligence, and pervaded with an expression of openness, integ-

rity, and decision in every feature and line. He was a man of middle height, rather stout, and broad-shouldered. A few grey hairs mingled with his thick black or dark brown hair, and a certain briskness of movement and penetration of look most emphatically pronounced him to be a man of action. Still in his prime, he is the possessor of a princely fortune, which he owes to no wild successful scheme of speculation, but to the three leading virtues of the commercial calendar, viz., Integrity, Perseverance, and Industry. His history, as told by himself, is sufficiently curious, and adds another to the many examples, that by these three attributes alone, men have been raised, from the lowest grade of society, to a par with the best and highest in the land.

J off was a swine-herd in a small village in the interior of Russia, where he lived with his parents. When about fifteen years of age, some one gave him a cigar; this he unrolled, and examining the make of it, contrived to manufacture several small ones out of it; these he sold, and having procured some native-grown tobacco, made others on a larger scale, which he also sold to his companions, until he had realised a silver ruble—about 3s. With this ruble he purchased a few articles, such as pedlars usually hawk about, and having obtained by the sale of these as much as five rubles, he deemed this a sufficient sum

wherewith to try his fortune in a wider sphere; and this Russian Whittington started off on foot to St. Petersburg. Here he was fortunate enough to procure a place in a tobacconist's shop. In the manufacture of cigars, a certain amount of refuse accumulates, and this, prior to J off's time, had been cast away as useless. But having made a use for it, this he sold—it being his own perquisite—and the amount realized thereby, added to savings in his wages, soon enabled him to hire a shop, and set up in a very small way on his own account. This happened thirty years ago. At the present moment his net profits average about a thousand rubles per day, for his transactions in cigars, &c., extend all over the empire, and considerably beyond it, both east and west.

A very remarkable and noble feature in his character is, that with all his wealth and high civic position, he never forgets, or permits others to forget, his origin, but relates his story with an honest pride that seems to revel in the facts. He tells how he wished to get his parents up to the capital, to be near him and his family, that they might be the sharers of his fortune and happiness. But no, he could not prevail upon them to leave their early home, and therefore he built them a good house, and planted a garden round it, and made them as comfortable as he could in their village, where he also built a

foundling hospital, and established a bank, and to encourage both rich and poor to save money, he gave as much as six per cent. He has built a handsome church in St. Petersburg; to the poor he gives with a *largesse* peculiarly his own, and no case of distress is ever presented to him but it is relieved forthwith. In his house and domestic concerns he is generous almost to a fault.

Every Easter Mr. J off presents the Empress with an offering of a hundred rose-trees in full flower, for her fairy garden under glass: on the last occasion he was honoured by receiving the thanks of Her Majesty in person. The house of this large-minded man is frequented by the first noblemen in the city, for, independent of his superior intelligence and real nobility of character, he gives superlative entertainments and many a gourmand noble noodle, who cannot appreciate the man for his own sake, manages to acknowledge his power in the way of dinners, to which he does ample justice, flattering himself meanwhile into the belief that he does the ignoble tradesman a great honour in eating the delicate fare which his rubles have provided for him. But the host generally knows his guests, and a graphic story is related by his admirers of how he served several notables of this kind.

A snug party of noble gourmands had partly invited themselves to dine at J off's, who

ordered a dinner of a superlatively delicate and dainty kind, which, the better to appreciate, his guests had not broken their fast for the day. Already the noble visitors have arrived, and their host leads the way to the sumptuously-spread board. But somehow J off is attracted towards the windows of the *salle à manger*, and becomes so deeply interested in some one or something in the street below, that he appeared suddenly oblivious of dinner and dinner-guests; while one servant after another entered, laden with a succession of savoury dishes, sending up clouds of incense, to the most cruel tantalization of the ravenous expectants. But still their host retained his place by the window, where he continued to bow and smile to some one in the street; until almost maddened at the delay, the impatient guests approached the window, and, to their amazement and horror, beheld an apparently interminable herd of swine, with a numerous escort of herds, passing along, and to whom J off bowed in the most affable manner.

“These are my oldest friends, gentlemen,” said the wag, pointing to the cavalcade, “and no one shall ever have to say of J off that when he grew rich and entertained the great nobles at dinner, he forgot the friends of his youth. No, no, my brethren,” added the provoking host, as if addressing the procession;

“rely upon it, I shall never forget you.” And there he continued to stand until the very last grunter had passed.

Mr. J off's first wife was a peasant, and by her he had two sons, now grown up; his wife dying some years since, he married a well-educated lady, by whom he has several children, and it is reported that he settled upon her, at their marriage, a fortune so large that it nearly turned her head.

Having partaken of chocolate, a party of young military officers conducted us to a tower of considerable elevation attached to the little villa. Others formed boating parties, and rowed about the several lakes that intersect the grounds. The view from the top of the tower commanded an extensive range all over the surrounding country, Peterhoff and Cronstadt, which are about thirty versts off, being clearly discernible. Nature had been most niggard of her beauties in this direction, but Art had rendered it a little fairy region, making the most of every elevation and patch of solid earth. But where the pretty cottages and ornamental gardens ceased, a desolate waste of water, intersected here and there by ridges and plots of low willows or reeds, stretched out into apparently boundless space.

In this neighbourhood, but nearer the city, are situated the English brewery, a large cotton mill,

and a very extensive sugar-refining establishment, the property of one of the oldest and most highly esteemed of the British residents. This gentleman contributes most loyally towards keeping up the spirit of this interesting *fête*, for on this day his house—which is situated on the line of route—is thrown open to all the friends and acquaintance of the family, and as these include the principal British and foreign residents, and many Russian families of rank, a most delightful “gathering” annually takes place here; the festivities of the morning terminating in a dance, to the superlative music of a military band, followed by a sumptuous supper: and not a few there are among the dancers of the community, who anticipate, for months beforehand, this very delightful *finale* as the greatest attraction of the Mayday *fête*; and it is one of my own most agreeable *souvenirs* of life in Imperial Petersburg.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sudden Outburst of Summer—Preparation for Flight—Eman-
 cipation of the Neva—Shopping—Family Coach—The
 Tarentasse—Charming Partner “for Better for Worse”—
 The Start—Nearly Shaken to Pieces—Parting Gift.

ON the outburst of that short-lived lovely Russian summer, anticipated with such pleasure as only those who have sojourned long in a climate of extremes can fully appreciate; when earth, starting from her lethargy, drops off her winter shroud, and in a day or two is robed in richest green; when the soft snapping buds are heard to burst, and busy nature seen to grow, then it is that Petersburg awakes with the buzz of preparation for the approaching flight of its wealthy population.

Now is the momentous event of ice-bound

Neva's emancipation watched for by all classes with as much solicitude as the hopeful crisis that is to restore life to a beloved object. Now sledges, furs, and winter windows are thrown aside, and resuscitated humanity of all ages saunters along the sunny sides of streets, or, in vehicles, splashes at furious pace through seas and lakes of melting snow, which inundate every thoroughfare. Now all seem astir with the "business" of life. A thousand things have to be done. Purchases to be made, visits paid, farewells exchanged, and all in the shortest period of time possible. Nevsky is like a Fair, with gaily-dressed pedestrians, and Gastinoë Dvor in a state of siege. And hark! amidst all this turmoil, this hurry and bustle of life, the beautiful strange-sounding bells of the Greco-Russian church burst forth in merry peal; and a *feu de joie* from the fortress announces to the St. Petersburg world that the Neva, their beloved, yea, almost sacred, Neva, has burst her bonds, and is free!

A few days later, one loaded travelling-carriage after another rolls out of the city; carts, laden with furniture, slowly wend their way to the suburban villages. The gazettes announce the departures for Western Europe, *via* Stettin, Lubec, London, and Hull. The last morsel of Ladoga ice has floated beyond the confines of Cronstadt; the coast is all clear, and the river-

steamers are bearing away aristocratic freights of the young and gay to Peterhoff, Oranienbaum, Revel, Abo, and Helsingfors.

The C——'s are off with the rest, leaving their compatriot to follow them next spring, but in the meantime anticipating, with as much pleasure as her Russian friends, that visit to their country home in the distant interior, which is even now on the eve of realization.

On the evening prior to our departure for the interior, and just before retiring for the night, Father Alexie, the family papa, or priest, arrived; and, agreeably to universal custom, offered up prayers in behalf of the travellers, who on the morrow were to enter on new scenes of peril and temptation. The good father did not detain us long, but in a short, simple, earnest prayer, to which the 'most fastidious sectarian must have listened with pleasure, he exhorted the Father of all to take under His special protection, these, the children of his flock, about to be separated from him, their pastor and friend, it might be for ever. The fervent appeal of the excellent man sank deep into every heart, and tears moistened nearly every eye as he concluded. A hearty round of shaking hands succeeded, with the reciprocal expression of best wishes, and our respected old friend took his leave, carrying away with him the regard of the stranger, as well as the united

esteem of the children of his care, whom he had so well taught.

By dawn next morning the distant murmur of busy tongues, and the tiptoe traffic of servants over the polished *parquet* in the adjoining rooms, reminded me that the journey, so long anticipated and so industriously prepared for, was on the eve of becoming a reality, and that I too must be up and doing.

Those unacquainted with social life in Russia cannot form the remotest idea of the onerous duties and wholesale responsibilities devolving on the mistress of a family by the removal of her household from the city to the interior, often necessitating, for the benefit of masters and society, periodical journeys of 1,000 or 1,200 versts to the capital, which she performs with as little concern as an Englishwoman would accompany her family from London to her country home in one of the provinces, where, be it remembered, she has all the necessaries of life within her reach; but it is far otherwise in Russia, for there it not unfrequently happens that a man has to perform a three days' journey for a piece of soap or a yard of muslin! Thus the wants of the summer require to be thought of and provided for long beforehand, and not only bought in, but transferred with the family whithersoever its destination, oftentimes as far as the confines of Siberia. Where a family consists of daughters,

only imagine the thousands of little requirements, of absolute necessities for a warm summer; and notwithstanding that the Russian ladies are quite as good economists in matters of dress as the French—very cleverly transmogrifying winter ball-dresses into summer *negligés*, white satin shoes into dark ones, tulle skirts into summer mantelets and transparent bonnets, &c.—yet many substantialities have to be purchased. The very provision of small wares—such as needles, pins, buttons, tapes, hooks and eyes, boot-laces, cords, ribbons, cottons, thread, coloured silks, wools, &c.—is perplexing enough by reason of their insignificance, but the omission of either of these might cause inconvenience or discomfort to a whole family for three or four months of the year. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that a house in St. Petersburg, at least for a month prior to the departure of a family, somewhat resembles a beehive, the inmates setting out early and returning home late, heavily laden with stores for the time of need. Now every equipage is brought into requisition, from the stately coach-and-four—the usual conveyance for age—to the light little droschkii, which dashes along at full speed—now with a military freight cloaked up to the chin, his steel helmet glittering in the sun's bright rays like another luminary; and now bearing onward a couple of black-eyed sylphides

—its broad splashers scarcely protecting its occupants from occasional showers of spray, as it ploughs through the miniature oceans, seas, lakes, and streamlets of melting snow, which submerge the streets of the capital at the present season of thaw. And now the bustle of the Nevski is complete, for along the breadth and length of this fine perspective is situated nearly every attraction, in the way of magazine and shop. Here is the most famous magazine in Russia, the *soi-disant* English, where many an article of Russian manufacture, with an English name, finds a ready sale. Lower down in the same street is the Russian magazine, which a few years since presented the stranger with a most curious, costly, and interesting collection of articles exclusively of Russian manufacture—an epitome of her handiwork truly surprising. But here, too, foreign influence has crept in, and now half the stock is French, or, as a facetious countrywoman whispered in my ear, “only called so,” to obtain a sale, for—to the scandal of the Russian ladies be it spoken—they will pay any price for articles of dress manufactured in foreign countries, turning up their eyes with the most supercilious contempt at their own, though I have known a silk dress of Moscow manufacture at 3s. per yard, and a *de laine* at 1s. 4d., worn by an Englishwoman in London, meet with general admiration, being mistaken for

French, on account of the rich colour and beauty of design. And I doubt not for an instant, that had the same articles been smuggled into Russia, under the names of "Rage d'Eugénie," and "Bleue de Napoléon," one at twelve francs per yard, and the other at six, there would have been a perfect contest as to who should be the fortunate possessor. The Moscow velvets, sheeting, home-made linens, boots, shoes, &c., which travellers—the English at least—carry away with them in considerable quantities, are treated with the same neglect. How the manufacturers exist, I know not. Along this perspective is a colony of shops, each notorious in its own way, and so exclusively the mode, that the moment you set eyes on a Russian exquisite, you know almost to a certainty where he procured all the necessaries of his daily life, even to the magazine where he last lunched on oysters at ten pence a-piece, or that from which he culls bouquets for his lady-love, at something like three or four guineas each. And amidst these costly magazines, one perceives in the background, several feet beyond the frontage line of the street, the Gastinoë Dvor, or general market for the sale of all kinds of merchandise.

The Gastinoë Dvor is a covered building of two stories, consisting of numerous lines of shops, each row or line dealing in the same commodity—

for example, the mirror line, the furniture line, the silkmercers' line, and so on—the warehouses of the wholesale traders being on the second story, which arrangement considerably expedites the business of the retail sellers below. The Gastinoë Dvor offers a large choice of goods, at a third less than the shops on the Nevski, with the civilest shopmen in the world, and every necessary under cover; but, with all these advantages, until recently, the aristocracy considered it a second-rate mart, well enough for the commonalty, and therefore paid the penalty by avoiding it. The arrangements of this bazaar are so thoroughly Russian, that it is just there the stranger goes in preference to the magazines *en vogue*, which resemble ordinary shops in the capitals of western Europe. The Gastinoë Dvor, however, like every other institution of the kind, strides onwards with the mutable march of progress, and within the last five years the quaint little windows and primitive doors have, in many cases, given way to a noble facade of plate glass, the improvements within keeping pace with the external. Handsome mahogany fittings, French-polished counters, and light cast-iron spiral staircases leading to the wholesale regions above—for in many cases one firm combines both branches of the trade—so dashing, that it might almost be mistaken for a wholesale importation from Paris or London.

These changes have begotten changes, for now many an aristocratic dame, ay, and *soi-disant* patriotic too, who formerly used to visit the market under the incog. of a shabby bonnet and thick veil, leaving her carriage beyond the vulgar purlieu, to drive a stiffer bargain with the yielding shopman, than would the wife of the poor cheno-venick at her elbow, will now order her four black steeds to his very doors. The Gastinoë Dvor may therefore now be pronounced in a fair way of growing great, and ere long the tradesmen of this industrious, civil community may hold their heads as high as those of their foreign neighbours on the Perspective.

To this famous Dvor, therefore, all the busy bees of Petersburg repair for summer supplies, on the eve of the general remove to "country quarters," for even where families spend the summer within a couple of hours of the city, by steam-boat or railroad, the same preparation is made, though not on so extensive a scale as where the distance amounts to versts by the hundred. Yet the disagreeableness of shopping in that hot, dusty, deserted capital, in the middle of summer, even for a single day, is sufficiently great to make careful housewives mindful of husbands' endless shirt-buttons, and spinsters of their knitting-pins and crochet-hooks.

We were to start at eight o'clock precisely.

Already a monstrous travelling-carriage appeared in the yard below, vibrating on its broad springs with each accession of well-packed imperial, which now rose in a formidable triad on the roof; while every available space in its capacious body, which afforded ample gratification to the exacting packer, was stuffed and strained to the utmost tension, reserving, after all, bountiful accommodation within its well-lined sides for half-a-dozen ordinary-sized individuals.

Truly, this was a perfect "John Bull" specimen of a "family coach"—which, by the way, was built by an English coachmaker at Moscow—although it would have been more to the taste of that portly gentleman, had the cupboard with which it was provided been devoted to the purposes for which it was intended, and its cellar filled with old port and sparkling champagne instead of with the—family *goloshes*! Indeed, without any pretension to the assumption of being a *bon-vivant*, I felt that, for so long a journey, an empty cellar was highly improvident, and an empty cupboard still worse; but as I had determined to forego the soft velvet cushions of the luxuriously-swung "family coach" for the rougher but safer accommodation of the springless *taren-tasse*, I was free to provide for the creature comforts of its occupants as I thought best.

The vehicle in which I had proposed to get

over the 1,100 or 1,200 versts which lay before us, is a thoroughly Russian conveyance. The tarentasse is a low, long-bodied, springless cart, something like a britzka; it is set upon four wheels, which are attached to a couple of transverse poles, upon which the body appears to rest; these poles extend considerably beyond the vehicle behind, conveying the idea of a tail, to which the luggage is frequently attached. The head, or hood, is provided with a leather covering, which can at pleasure be extended over the entire vehicle, buttoning close in at the back of the seat contiguous to the coach-box, and under it at the sides. There are neither doors nor steps to let down, but a small fixed foot-rest, and a shallow panel to step over; the admission of light being through two small windows, about four inches square, framed in the leather of the covering, which leather, when not required over the tarentasse, is strapped up round the head.

Naturally concluding that the vehicle of a country is the best adapted to the contingencies it is likely to encounter, as well as keeping in view, that the length of the tarentasse would admit of a grateful change of position, even of a full-length stretch, I clung most tenaciously to my resolve of travelling by that mode and no other, notwithstanding the assurance of everybody that I should be glad to give it up ere we reached the

first stage. I had, however, made my own calculations, nor was I disappointed in the least.

As eight o'clock drew near, friends came pouring in to take a last farewell. A servant now brought word that all was ready, when, without any pre-arrangement whatever, each individual present dropped into the seat nearest to each, and with the head inclined and the hands clasped, remained so for several minutes,*—the most profound silence succeeding to a Babel of sound, which in turn gave place to another burst, equally as sudden, now intermingled with kisses—the ladies embracing each other with two kisses on one cheek and one on the other, alternately—the gentleman raising the hand of the lady to his lips, while she simultaneously approaches her lips to his cheek—"praschäite, praschäite," or, "good-bye, good-bye," proceeding from each of the hearty good-wishers in every degree of intonation, from the gruff ejaculatory of the bluff old General, to the silvery "adieu" of the last winter's *débutante*; and surrounded by these kind friends, so we proceeded to the carriages. The larger party at once proceeded to their unwieldy "caravan," which looked something stupendous, with its three "wheelers" abreast, and two leaders in front, its *calèche* behind, with a couple of maids, and a

* The last prayer before setting out on a journey.

large, roomy coach-box with footman and driver. Our tarentasse conveyed the idea of a spider beside an elephant; but light, snug, and trim withal—less fashionable perhaps, but infinitely safer and more comfortable. Our horses—also Roman fashion, three abreast, the middle one carrying a musical sounding wolf-bell, suspended from a bow which spans his neck—were pawing and capering, anxious to follow their leaders, which had already started.

Eudoxie was to be the partner of my fate “for better, for worse,” during the journey; and knowing more of tarentasse-travelling than I did, she advised that the covering should be secured all round, at least till we cleared the city gate. No sooner said than done: there was no time to lose, for the others were considerably in advance of us. Another adieu and shake of the hand—another—and another, to those kind ones who still stood near. And now a dozen arms are raised to lift the leather covering over us, and as many kind fingers to button it tight down, and we are off—off in the wake of the “seventy-four,” at least half-a-mile ahead of us.

For some minutes I held on by the side of the tarentasse, perfectly bewildered, and unable to utter a word; for our “vehiculum” having no springs, and the streets of the capital being full of inequalities, the violent movement of our con-

veyance was so excessive, that I expected every instant my neck would be dislocated. While the mattress and cushions kept their places, matters, though bad, were still supportable; but as we progressed, our pace appeared to quicken, so that the violent jerking soon displaced, not only these, but ourselves, and every object, big and little, around. Fortunate it was that the leather had been so securely fixed; otherwise, to a certainty, we should have been jerked out, "bag and baggage," into the streets. As it was, stout carpet-bags, and burly portmanteau struggled for place, and a violent contest ensued as to whether they or we should be uppermost; while parcels of biscuits and other edibles started from their hiding-places, and, flying about in all directions, covered us with crumbs; and to give a finishing *coup d'éclat* to the whole, down came rattling upon our devoted heads the contents of a netting, which, slung from one side of the tarentasse to the other, had been filled with books, baskets, and innumerable sundries. It was high time for action; so, stopping the further gambols of a restive carpet-bag with one foot, and of an aspiring portmanteau with the other (which active measure kept several others in subjection), propping up several articles with one hand, and holding as many as possible together with the other—still we proceeded—thump, bump; now a twist on one side, and then

one on the other; and again—thump, bump—bump, thump;—the mischievous Eudoxie all the time shrieking with laughter, her head ensconced in one of the chintz cushions, which she carried on it gipsy-bonnet fashion, a corner behind and one before, and a hand grasping one on either side as tight as possible, by way of preserving her head in its right place. Ever and anon her voice reached me above the din of the wheels and jingling bell, shouting out as well as her laughter would permit, “Comme c’est charmant — c’est délicieux, parole d’honneur,” imitating a cadet of our acquaintance, who thus prefaced every remark: “Mais c’est une idée lumineuse, tout-à-fait originelle, et si comfortable!” and then came another peal of laughter, in which it was impossible not to join, notwithstanding all my weighty cares. Happily the violent movement of our *voiture* now began to abate, and after a gentler run of about ten minutes we suddenly stopped. The silence of the suburbs reigned around us, and a sound as of soldiers presenting arms announced, to our exceeding joy, that we had gained the city gate. Some one from without fumbled at the button-holes of our leather door, which opened, and displayed to our astonished gaze Alexander Nicholäevitch de —, certainly of all individuals in the Russian world the least expected and least welcome at

that moment, to cast his fastidious, critical eyes over the scene of disorder before him. Wishing to say adieu, he had called at the residence we had just left, a few minutes after our departure, and knowing that the supervision of our passports would delay us at the city gate, he hurried on and soon overtook our cavalcade—for several military acquaintances accompanied us thus far in their own equipages. The ostensible object of his visit, however, was to present us with a copy of Miss Eshemoff's abridgment of the history of Russia, by Karamzin, which Eudoxie and I had commenced translating from the Russ into English, and purposed continuing *en route*, when opportunity offered. He had heard of our plan, and testified his approval by this polite offering, being the more valuable as every incident connected with any place through which we were to pass was marked out.

Alexander Nicholäevitch was a soldier, and doubtless a brave one too, and that he was a patriot of the first order was clearly inferable from the ardour with which he expatiated on the graceful erection which towered above us, in the form of a triumphal archway, and on the Russian victories it stood there to commemorate, in which he had occupied a prominent position, viz., in battles with the Turks, Persians, and Poles, just after the accession of the Emperor Nicholas.

Had time permitted, we should have been enlightened with many interesting details, but our passports were ready, and the tarentasse also, which we had vacated the better to look at the handsome gateway, during which time the indefatigable Alexie—who shared our box with the driver—had set all to rights. One peep into the family coach, to assure them that our heads were still on our shoulders, and again we resumed the places which, but half-an-hour before, had been the scene of so much discomfort, not to say alarm, to me at least; but such is the philosophy of life, and well for us it is so. The storm which yesterday uprooted the giants of the forest, and scattered their branches to the winds, is forgotten in the sunshine of the present calm, and but for the *debris* of biscuits, apparent through the interstices of the mosaic of packages at the bottom of our vehicle, the rough *trajet* through the capital was no longer remembered.

Here again was another leave-taking, and once more the cavaliers, like true knights of yore, stooped to kiss the hands of the fair “ladyes,” they, unlike their prototypes of old, however—English ones at least—rewarding their devotion in kind, but on the cheek. Bolts flew back—the great gates creaked on their massive hinges a moment—they were again closed, and we debouched on a splendid *chaussée*, the high-road to ancient Moscow!

CHAPTER XX.

Cheteerie Rookie—Road Planned by Peter the Great—Palace of the Empress Elizabeth—Alarming Conduct of the Post Horses—Ejora—Vaccine Institution Founded by Catherine II.—A Model Highway—Russian Villages—A Russian “Lang Town o’Kirca’dy”—Pink Church—Beauty of Scenery—Superlative Beef-steaks—Novgorod and Ingermannland—Splendid Sunset—A Novel Bed.

CHETEERIE ROOKIE, or, “four hands,” ten and a-half versts from St. Petersburg, is so called from a direction-post which here marks the way to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Peterhoff, and Tzarskoë-Celo. A remarkable fact, illustrating the astuteness of Peter the Great, is, that the line of railroad running between St. Petersburg and Moscow was actually marked out by Peter himself, as being nearer, by many, many miles, than the great Moscow high-road, and upon which, had he lived longer, he meant to construct a new road. It is said to be straight as an arrow

between the two capitals. Here we stopped to change horses.

As yet but at the commencement of that journey anticipated so long by all, the occupants of the tarentasse, both keen and vigorous, were quite disposed to relish any pickings in the way of novelty that might fall within the line of their route, or even a little way out of it. Quixote-like, one of them had even resolved on adventure beforehand, and, if none should present itself unsought, to ferret it out; feeling as sure that there are romance and poetry in the most ordinary concerns of life, as modern philosophers do about the existence of aluminium in bricks—a resolve sufficiently necessary in a country whose people never voluntarily thrust themselves and their affairs before the curious gaze of the stranger. It should be a favourite maxim with all travellers, that nothing upon which the eye rests is too insignificant for enquiry. The whole volume of nature is then open to their perusal and study, and that great encyclopædia of the arts and sciences, rendered so difficult by the technicalities of man's teaching, may then be read with the facility of a primer. I had some difficulty, however, in bringing over my pretty companion to these views. With a peculiar twinkle of her little mischievous black eyes, she begged to know what I could find worthy of enquiry about a

shabby, though still substantial-looking, brick-house, which she pointed out near the roadside, a little in advance of us, and evidently a very common change-house. The very fact of its being built of brick, with a certain air of age and "shabby gentility" about it, would have been quite sufficient in any country, but especially in Russia, to prove that it must have been an object of interest in bygone days; "and I doubt not, if its walls could speak, they could tell us a few things that would both surprise and amuse us," I replied.

"Indeed, you are right," said one of a convoy-party, coming up at the moment, "for that shabby old inn was, in days of yore, the summer palace of the Empress Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the Great, and many were the gay revels she held there, and to which people repaired even from Novgorod and Moscow."

"Well, Euxodie, that is pretty fair, to commence with," I replied, rather triumphantly. "Will you think with me now, you sceptic?"

"Yes—no—not quite, yet; I will try again."

In the midst of our debate the musical wolf-bell began to tingle, and we are off at extraordinary speed, three of the "wiriest" looking animals in nature doing our duty—light, it is true—with the velocity of race-horses. Had they primed the beasts with vodka or quicksilver?

"What can you be thinking about, Marie

Edwardovna?" shouted my companion, above the clatter of hoofs, and bell, and wheels, as we rocked from side to side in the rapidity of our transit.

"I am wondering what they have given to those horses, to evoke vigour like this out of such shabby-looking animals."

"How strange you English are!" screamed my friend, in a convulsion of laughter. "What should they have to eat, but grass and corn? And why should you plague yourself thinking what they have had? In Russia, a lady never cares or thinks about such things. Intoxicated horses! But what an original idea! Who ever heard of such *animaux*?"

Indeed I could have told her of more than one revered old favourite of the genus at home, who takes his pot of stout as well as any Greenwich pensioner.

"Intoxicated horses!" and Eudoxie shouted again.

"Ask Alexie, and you will find that they have had something unusual given to them, for the driver can scarcely hold them in."

"And what would Alexie and the yemschick think of me for meddling in their concerns?" inquired my friend.

"But if they dislocate our necks for us, that will be our concern, will it not?" So saying, I put my head out at the window-door, the better to

ascertain the precise state of affairs. There was our triad, or "troika"—as three horses harnessed abreast are termed—usually so prosy, with slouching heads and shuffling gait, looking like war-steeds, as, with crested necks closely reined in, our Jehu guided them with outstretched arms and almost standing posture, reminding one of Nero competing for the race prize. All his strength could scarcely check their speed, their object apparently being to get ahead of their *confrères* attached to the convoy which preceded us.

"What is the matter with the horses?" I enquired of Alexie, who, with many an "Ach Barishna," related a doleful ditty, "the sum and substance" of which was, that somebody at Cheteerie Rookie had left for a moment a vessel containing vodka in the corner of the trough, out of which the horses ate their corn, intending to fetch it away immediately; meanwhile the horses upset it, and the yemschick, thinking the liquid would run through the chinks of the wooden trough, threw into it a quantity of water, so as to wash the vodka out of the corn. The steeds, however, having no notion of such waste, drank up the whole of it, and seemingly enjoyed the corn to the very last grain, licking their lips long after they were *en route*, and, like once-inebriated humanity, hankered after more.

"So they are intoxicated, after all, Eudoxie.

We have learnt at least an amusing fact, by taking the trouble to inquire. Do we agree, from this moment to the end of our travelling partnership, and for ever, that instead of taking things literally as they come, we shall look into them and give ourselves the trouble to inquire?"

"Agreed!" said my friend, shaking hands on the compact; we thus sealed it, resolving, after Southey's valuable recipe, "to make the most of little pleasures, and the best of everything."

At half-past two, our reeling steeds rattled up to the change-house at Ejora, thirty-one versts from Petersburg. Here we exchanged the inebriates for a sober, angular-looking trio, which had evidently but just come off a journey.

Turning at this place to one of Alexander Nicholaëvitch's marked references, we found that a famous battle had been gained on the banks of this river by Alexander Nevsky over the Swedes. Alexie, who is something of an antiquary, an active searcher after quaint sticks, queer-shaped stones, highly-coloured flowers, skeleton leaves, &c., came to tell us that there was a curious Swedish palace near the village, one which had been brought from Schlüsselberg, on Lake Ladoga. Some years since, in this neighbourhood, was an institution, founded by Catherine II., for the inoculation of children. With their usual prejudice, the peasants combated this salutary provision, as they are

wont to do any new custom of which they cannot be made to understand the utility. None were willing to take the initiative, when the Empress sent for her infant son Paul, and, by way of example and encouragement, delivered him up to the operator. But still they continued shy on the subject, the men being even more averse to it than the women. Judging by the many deeply-marked countenances which one encounters among the lower orders, it is scarcely to be inferred that this salutary discovery is more in favour with them at the present day, some of them giving the same reason for their objection that I have heard offered in Scotland, where it was also much opposed, viz. "that it was taking the power out of God's hand."

Ingle—ingle, jingle, ingle, the obligato accompaniment to our every tune, whether grave or gay, and the refrain of our song the night throughout, and through the live-long day. And we are again off, scampering at rocking pace over one of the most superb roads in the world; our twelve fresh hoofs resounding upon its hard, smooth surface, like clattering footfalls along an English country road on a frosty December morning.

On either side of us lay interminable marshes, the favourite haunt of the graceful élan or elk, and the home of myriads of wild-fowl, as well as of the loveliest wild-flowers; while through their

midst stretched the long white road, till lost in the vista of distance. Talk of Roman roads! The most imposing of them were mere bantlings after the great Russian highway from Petersburg to Moscow, the construction and maintenance of which, in a climate like this, the frosts, melting snows, and fiery sun of which play such sad havoc with the creations of men, seem like an eighth wonder of the world. For how many miles is this splendid road supported on piles, needing frequent renewal! This highway to their ancient and cherished capital is a perfect model of care and neatness. How compactly stand the verst-posts, surrounded by their squares of tessellated pavement, looking like variegated carpets spread out by the wayside, while accumulations of ready-broken flint, and chips of granite methodically squared off, and surrounded by well-built low walls, show the perfect order and system with which the repairs are regulated. But where are the hands and the bodies belonging to them who keep up this mighty *chef d'œuvre*? Not a human being nor a habitation of the meanest description has been visible for miles! It looks almost as if it had been conjured into form, and was duly repaired by some genii of the swamp.* On

* This road is 677 versts, or 512 miles, long, being only 38 less than the length of Great Britain, allowing 550 miles for its length as the crow flies.

reference to a printed official table of the different post stations *en route*, we found that we were near the small village of Sablina, eleven and a-half versts from Ejora, through which we rattled, followed by numerous shock-headed barefooted urchins and clamorous dogs, thankful recipients of various fragmentary edible contributions, the examination and division of which stopped at once their speed and their shouting.

The term "village," as applied to our sweet "Auburns," picturesque, white-washed, ivy-clad settlements, straggling over hill and valley, almost hidden amongst foliage, as if playing "bo-peep" with one another, scarcely applies here. Although, externally, the Russian village, so-called, is wanting in these attributes of the picturesque, yet these cottages present many comforts unknown to a large proportion of our poor of Great Britain. Their huts, or isbas, though built of wood, are strongly constructed, and in the winter comfortably heated. Many of the cottages of the Crown peasants display a highly effective and even artistic style of decoration—the work of their own hands too—in elaborate patterns of perforated wood, the overhanging eaves of the gable-ends being adorned in this way, as well as the shutters, balcony, garden-rails, &c., imparting to them at a distance, the appearance of lace, and giving to their little homes a refined and even elegant ap-

pearance. But, as a general rule, on the estates of private individuals, these ornaments, so useful and salutary to the people, and so attractive to the eye of the stranger, are unfortunately but little heeded.

A Russian isba consists generally of two stories, and if but of one, this is commonly raised several feet from the ground. For the most part, each peasant and his family have a house to themselves, though that dwelling may as often consist of one room as of four, but to each is attached a yard behind, round which run out houses or sheds for live stock, which consist at least of a horse, a cow, sheep—for their skins only—pigs, for their bristles, and fowls. Unlike our Paddy, the Russian serf has the greatest horror of sharing an apartment with his livestock, dogs, cats, and sundry pugnacious cosmopolitans of the insect tribe excepted. These villages commonly consist of two rows of log-huts, which are detached, being a few feet apart, and planted on each side of the highway, gable-end to the road.

As soon as a peasant youth is of age he chooses a wife, and a site for his house at the same time. Having no notion of standing behind his neighbours in the ranks of life, he lays his timbers at their side. Thus, as the marrying, and consequently building, part of the community increases,

so the double rows of huts travel along the high-road for miles. The *Intendant*, or the proprietor, either indifferent or unwilling to interfere, yields to them in the meantime a point of such little importance. But when these villages begin to walk into the confines of other estates, their travelling propensities have to be reined in, and then ensues a bickering and contention quite worthy their self-willed republican ancestry of Novgorodian notoriety. They won't be thrust behind—no, not they; their grandfathers stood in the front ranks, and why cannot they? Reason is quite out of the question. Their *seigneur* commands; they threaten. Much might be done for their own benefit, and for that of the empire at large, but for this blind, dogged adherence of the serf to his old habits and customs, which are those almost of the Slavenæ themselves, so faithfully have they been transmitted from father to son, and any encroachment on which is often the signal for serious, if not fatal, vengeance. Thus encountering perpetual opposition, the proprietor, disgusted, leaves the management of his property to the care of a mercenary, whose only aim is to fill his pocket at the expence of both, *seigneur* and serf.

The Emperor Nicholas, however, has made an important improvement with respect to these village-cottages, having enacted that henceforth all

wooden dwelling-houses are to be built on a sunken foundation of brick or stone, a precaution perfectly intelligible, for, during the winter, eddying winds, or other causes, may have contributed to an accumulation of snow, several feet deeper on one side of the hut than on the other, which, on the melting of the snow in spring, would naturally incline the wooden superstructure to that side at which the greatest depth of snow had melted; after years of successive sinkings, these erections become so far out of the perpendicular that they appear ready to topple over on the first passer-by. The appearance of some of these villages, from this cause, has the most grotesque effect. Here one meets a gable-end bowing into the road, as if courteously saluting all comers; a little farther on, another throws up its broad overhanging eaves, as if retiring in disgust; the next seems to be seized with cramp in the side, while its friendly neighbour leans over to whisper condolence and sympathy; those on the opposite side of the way apparently imitating, but in inverse ratio, the singular attitudes of their *vis-a-vis*, while a few, more steady or less afflicted, appear to support the ills of life with tolerable equanimity.

Some of these huts have almost an animal appearance at a little distance, and are consequently capable of expression, for many of them resemble

wild boars ; and from their roofs being covered with loose straw, retained on the slant by branches of trees, these, getting out of place and falling into certain lines, form the most comical combinations. This is particularly obvious when thrown out in strong relief by a lurid sunset.

Few of the Russian villages are adorned with trees ; indeed, no tree, big or little, young or old, is safe within reach of the hatchet of the peasant, for down it is sure to come, either for fire-wood, articles of household use, or toys, puzzles, and ornamental bagatelles, most cleverly cut out with this same wonderful hatchet. Most cottages have a curious adjunct in the form of a miniature hut, which, in size and appearance, resembles a fashionable English lap dog's drawing-room house, and which, elevated upon a pole, provides a winter home for the starling, which is an especial pet of the peasant, who feeds him carefully during the rigorous season.

But a change comes o'er the face of the scene ; and, panorama-like, that world of flats and swamps gives place to dark frowning woods, black as night, and so thick as to be impervious to the sun's rays. And here, in the midst of a perpetual miasma, arising from the decomposition of a little empire of vegetable matter, the post-village of Tosna, twelve versts beyond Sablina—a travelling village with a vengeance—

stretches its lanky length three versts along the road, numbering a sickly population of 1,000 "souls," with about as many ciphers, or a species of nymphæ in petticoats—the slaves of their bearded and sandeled serf-lords. With the exception of the "Lang town o' Kirka'dy," in Fifeshire, I never traversed such a lank, long town in my life. Here is a goodly inn, built of brick, where an excellent dinner may be procured; and a very handsome pink church, with green domes, built by a rich yemschick, or post-boy, called Pauloff. At Tosna the Empress Mary met the corpse of her adored son, the first Alexander. It rested here on its way from Taganrog to St. Petersburg. The bereaved mother seized the cold hand of her first-born, and clasped it as if she would have instilled the warmth of her own life into it. Poor lady, what she must have suffered at this little way-side resting-place!

We changed horses here, but eschewed even a run to stretch our already stiff limbs; for the air, heavy and humid from the dank growth* and decay of ages, made us anxious to pass on. It was already past five p.m., and we had yet to make Riabova, eighteen versts hence, and beyond that Pomerania, fourteen and a-half further, before

* There is a project for burning down these woods; an Englishman having already made several successful experiments of the kind in different parts of the empire.

dinner, a rather long drive to whet the finest edge of appetites already sharp enough. The hotel at Pomerania being deemed so far superior, it was considered worth while to make the necessary stretch. Therefore, on we sped, and at nine, with grateful hearts, we hailed Pomerania, ravenous as hawks and wolves in December. The inn at this place is an excellent one, clean, orderly, and cheerful. Our dinner progressed, and among its varied dishes was one of beef-steaks, so startlingly English in appearance, that it required a second look to realize the certainty. Yes, they were veritable "biff-schticks" *à l'anglaise*—neither overdone nor underdone, but as Alderman Gobble would say, "just done to a T." "All honour be to whom honour is due," for this was the first occasion since we left Cologne—and we generally put up at the best hotels—that I had encountered this, one of our national dishes, properly cooked; but at this little station on the Moscow road, eighty miles in the interior of Russia, here were steaks, delicate, smoking hot, savory, and served with a daintiness equal to any prepared east of Temple Bar. But, as there are reasons for everything, so there is for this. The Imperial family always rests here when travelling by this road. The Tzar likes roast-beef and beef-steaks, which were prepared for him here. In this, as in a thousand other of

the infinitesimal comforts and necessities of even everyday life in Russia, the traveller may trace, and has reason to thank, the almost ubiquitous influence of this most diligent of men.

Pomerania, although a small place, is somewhat important, as being the frontier village which marks the confines of the Government of Petersburg, the ancient Ingermannland so often and so furiously contested.

At ten, we took our leave of Pomerania, thus bidding adieu for a time to the Government of Imperial Petersburg, with all its swamps and flats, and ever-varying climate. We were now cantering along through the south-western portion of that famous old Novgorod, the original home of the Slavenæ, that Staroë, or old Russia, the cradle of Russian power and historical story. The Government is of immense extent, and is divided into two unequal parts. The north-eastern and larger division is almost a continuation of the primitive wilds of Archangel and Olonetz, replete with swamps, dreary forests, and stagnant lakes, and swept by high and chilling north winds ; but the south-western or smaller portion, being more elevated, is drier and very productive.

Here the face of nature becomes, not only more sociable, but in some places dignified and grand, while in others the landscape is so home-like, so

truly English in its foreground luxuriance, that my heart grew full as it traced the mellow-tinted road sweeping round a noble park-like clearance, bounded in the background by a splendid wood of gigantic firs, which, surrounding a fine mansion, with pillared façade, seated on a verdant lawn, presented such a picture of an English Squire's domain that, for the moment, I gazed at the bearded yemshick, and his troika-harnessed team, and wondered whether he or the landscape was the foreigner. Farther on, amidst the windings of the road, several cottages, like wood-pigeons in their green wood-nests, peeped forth, adding another home feature to the scene.

And now leaving these beauties behind, far away in the distance before us, as if in another world, appears an indistinct outline, whether of "boar-backed" villages, or towns with glittering spire and dome-surmounted cross, or ships, or forests, whether of the earth or of the clouds, is too remote for human vision to determine, but over all glows the auriferous amber, and crimson, and glorious purple of departing Sol's mellow hues, which, catching the edges of the white clouds, and the tips of the black-green firs, and the angle of every object within their influence, seemed to have made an El Dorado of all I surveyed.

It was impossible to enjoy it alone ; so stirring up my friend, who—*entre nous*—had made her

“shake-down,” donned her night-cap, and comfortably retired for the night, amply protected from the cold—which, for several hours after sunset, is at this season still rather intense—by an ample wadded cloak and close-fitting velvet hood. She was at my side in an instant, and there we sate for an hour at least, silently watching all the varying changes of that brilliant scene, now gleaming in life and glory, and now waxing fainter and fainter, till lost in darkness. Superb and expressive type of all sublunary elements!—of that commingling of joy and sadness; of strength and weakness; of life and death; and, above all, of the resurrection of the righteous soul, like the sun of day, to new glories on the morrow.

The plaintive song of the yemschick sunk into an undertone, sounding in the “stilly night” like a requiem to day’s departed deity. Thoroughly overcome with our exercise, a little extra excitement, and more than a *quantum sufficit* of fresh air, the travellers sunk lower and lower among their cushions, and slept.

CHAPTER XXI.

Novgorod, the First Capital of Russia—Arrival of the Var-yaga-Russe—Aleg's Attack upon Constantinople—Conquest of Kiev—Novgorod a Republic—Institution of the Council—Pride of the Novgorodians—Their Trials—Their Downfall—The Curious Prophecy of Zosema—The First Kremlé—The Volkhoff—Legends of the Kremlé.

SLEPT, did I say?—yes, and never more comfortably in our lives; nor thought of stirring until the sun was already high in the blue heavens, about seven next morning. We had meanwhile made seventy versts; having passed through the stations of Babino, Chudova, Spaskaya, Politz, and Podberezie, still pursuing the course of the river Volkoff, and within an hour of that great-great-grandmother of all Russian cities, the venerable, time-honoured Novgorod! With this name are associated subjects of profound interest

to every thinking mind, whether it belongs to the Russian patriot or to the foreign reader of authentic Russian History. Even now we are within the confines of that nucleus whence quickened into life the stupendous proportions of that colossal modern empire, overshadowed by the monster pinions of the giant double-necked black eagle,* whose crowned heads and keen eyes most appropriately survey both the East and the West. Already we approach the stronghold of that tribe of the Slavenæ, who founded this mighty power, and of which a singularly characteristic trait is related by Miss Eshemoff in her abridgment of Karamzin's History of Russia.

* The origin of this symbola seems to be involved in some obscurity, but from a Russian antiquary in the interior I learned the following definition. The night that Alexander the Great came into the world, two eagles perched upon his father's house, from which the divines augured that the boy then born would one day be master both of Europe and Asia. Soon as Alexander could wield a shield, he adopted as his symbola or device, the two eagles of his birth-night visitation. These were also coarsely painted on the armour of his soldiers. On the invasion of Scythia by the Macedonians, he was compelled by the bravery of the Scythians to beat a hasty retreat, and they, in commemoration of the event, added the symbola of Alexander to their own—the thunderbolt of Jupiter—deeming it more appropriate to themselves, they being at the time masters of a great portion of Europe and Asia. The symbola of the Macedonians was so roughly executed as to convey the idea of one bird with two necks; hence the more modern double-necked eagle, clutching in his talons the Scythian thunderbolt.

THE PERPLEXED CHIEFS OF THE SLAVENÆ, AND
THE REMEDY THEY FOUND, A.D. 862.

“The Slavenæ were at that time divided into tribes; those in the north were governed by chiefs chosen from among the bravest of their race, but so many claimed this distinction that the rulers became very numerous, and consequently so divided in their sentiments that the people knew not whom to obey; discontent crept in, and broils and civil strife followed. There was no order in their homes, nor peace nor comfort anywhere; all was confusion. In this state of affairs, the Slavenæ looked around them for a remedy and found it. On the opposite shores of the Baltic lived a race called the Varyaga-Russe; they were accounted of superior wisdom, and were governed by a king, who reigned over them with the care and affection of a father; they enjoyed laws also.

“Now this tribe had gained many victories over the Slavenæ while they were weak from their own internal discords. They then remembered the order that prevailed among the Varyaga-Russe, and therefore sent some of their old men, as ambassadors, to the king of those people, to demand of him princes of his nation to rule over them.

“Three brothers were accordingly chosen, and

to them the grey-headed delegates conveyed the state of their country and the wishes of the people, in the following laconic and expressive terms:—"Our land is large and rich, but there is no order in it. Go thou and govern it."

Miss Eshemoff adds:—

"This request, unexampled in the history of ancient or modern times, seems strange to the exalted ideas of the moderns, but to me it has always appeared a proof of great generosity. To lay aside all feelings of pride, to save their land, tottering under the crying evils of misrule, was a great victory over self-love. For what triumph can be greater than that obtained over self? Why then should a quality, so estimable in the individual, not be equally appreciated in a nation? But, on the contrary, it has been denounced as a fault. Strangers will tell you that this triumph over self in the ninth century was a want of national pride; surely the desire for self-improvement is a noble pride. The Slavon had his feelings keen and sensitive as the Russian of the present day, and he did not choose to remain in his savage state. Perhaps an intuitive feeling of his future greatness gave him a desire to be civilised, and that early beginning tells with effect on their descendants of modern times.

"The three brothers chosen to rule the Slavenæ

were Ruric, Sinieuse, and Trevor. Ruric was made Prince of Novogorod ; Sinieuse of Esborsk, and Trevor of all the territory round the Byéloë Oser, or White Lake. Two years after, Sinieuse and Trevor died, leaving Ruric sole ruler of the three principalities, which he governed with much wisdom for seventeen years, and died, leaving an infant son called Egor, to the care of his brother-in-law Aleg, whom he appointed regent during the minority of his child."

HOW THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT WAS REMOVED FROM NOVOGOROD.

"Aleg was brave and clever : he conquered many of his neighbours, and extended the dominions of Egor as far as the Carpathian mountains ; but that he was not entirely blameless will be seen by the following.

"Among those who accompanied the three princes were two chiefs called Oskold and Deer. Thinking that there was more amusement in seeking adventure than in tilling the lands which had been given to them by their prince, they collected a small body of their comrades. Setting out from Novogorod in a southerly direction, following the course of the Dnieper, they stopped not until they reached the pretty town of Kiev, then a flourishing young settlement on the banks

of that river.* Here they did not parley long, but attacked the town and took it, constituting themselves princes of Kiev.

“Meanwhile, Aleg, in the capital, hearing on all sides accounts of the increasing prosperity of Kiev, and dreading the growing power of the chiefs who had constituted themselves its princes, determined to add this to his conquests. Knowing the bravery of these men, as well as that of the people of Kiev, he had recourse to a stragem, rather than hazard a battle. So, taking with him the little Egor, and accompanied by a chosen band of fighting men, he set out. Having arrived at that bank of the Dnieper opposite to Kiev, he here drew up the bulk of his small army, when, taking the little Egor in his arms, and a few of his followers, he proceeded across the Dnieper in a small boat. On approaching Kiev, he despatched a messenger to inform the two princes that some merchants of their nation had come from Novogorod to see them, and awaited

* The ancient Borysthenes ; it rises in the forest of Volkonski, near Dnapro, in the government of Smolenski, and forms the boundary between the vast governments of Moghilev, Tchernigov, Pultava, Taurida, Minsk, Kiev, and Kherson, and falls into the Black Sea between Ozakoff and Kinburn, after a course of 900 versts. A fleet of iron steamers are at the present moment being built in England, to supersede the clumsy old bark transport for cereals from these rich provinces to the depôts on the shores of the Black Sea.

them in a boat at the river-side. The unsuspecting princes, delighted to see their countrymen, hastened to welcome them, and just as they drew near to the boat, Aleg, holding aloft the baby Egor, exclaimed, 'You are no princes; here is the son of Ruric, and I am a prince of his blood. Down with the usurpers!' Whereupon, the followers of Aleg rushed upon Askald and Deer, and slew them on the spot.

"This was the black deed of Aleg's reign. He was a careful guardian to the young king, and did much for the infant empire. He united the two vacant Principalities to that of Novogorod, from which city, however, he withdrew the seat of government, and took up his abode at Kiev. Encouraged by his success, he determined to make war on the Greeks, who had for some time dreaded the growing power so near to them. For this purpose he had several hundred boats* constructed, which he floated down the Dnieper into the Black Sea. Taking the command of this primitive fleet, he directed his course towards Constantinople. On perceiving the approach of the Russians, the Greeks placed chains across the entrance to the Bosphorus, and so thwarted the plans of the foe by sea, but Aleg, nothing daunted,

* Probably these boats were constructed on the light plan of the coracle, for boats are still in use in Russia covered with the skins of animals, and often of the sturgeon.

landed his boats, and setting them upon wheels, rattled them full of armed men down to the gates of Constantinople, upon which he planted his standards, and from whence he could not be prevailed upon to remove them, until the Greeks brought him out a considerable sum of money which he demanded."

HOW NOVOGOROD BECAME A REPUBLIC, A.D., 950.

"The seat of government having been removed by Aleg to Kiev, the Novogorodians were left very much to their own resources. Succeeding princes were too much occupied in making war upon their neighbours, and upon Greece, to trouble themselves about subjects so far off; therefore the Novogorodians set about regulating their own internal affairs. They appointed overseers to collect the tribute for the Grand Prince of Kiev; and judges, to punish the wicked and reward the good. Even at this early stage of their history, desirous of throwing off the yoke of subjection, they revolted against the Princess Olga,—the then regent for her son Svatoslav, the son of Egor—but her presence among them, together with her persuasion, induced them to return to their allegiance, and under the progressive and salutary rule of Yarapolk, Vladimir I., his revered son, Yaroslav, and Vladimir II.—the adored Monomachus, or the "red son" of Russia—they

remained contented and prosperous, but weak rulers succeeding these great Princes, they refused to be governed by them; and in 1055 the famous Vyet-she, or council, was convened. This council consisted of the owners of the soil, or heads of the people, and the chief among the fighting men, then the two great divisions of the nation, for there were neither nobility nor trained soldiers. When any question of moment arose touching the commonwealth, the great bell of the council, "Vyet-she Kolokol," was pealed right lustily, and such representatives as happened to be within hearing, hastened instantly to the Assembly, which met in the grand council-chamber of the great and good Prince Yaroslav. The manner of addressing the assembly may be gathered from the words of Mistislav, the son of Mistislav, called "the brave and the happy," on his departure to do battle with the Hungarians and Poles, who invaded his principality in 1216.

"I make my vow to St. Sophia—to the coffin of my father—and to you, good people of Novgorod. Strangers occupy our renowned city of Galitsh. I must drive them out of it, but I shall never forget you. I hope that my bones may rest among you; and that I may sleep with my father in St. Sophia.' " *

* The principal church of Novgorod, which is dedicated to St. Sophia, the tutelar saint of the Novgorodians.

The Novgorodians at this time not only traded with their neighbours, but with Denmark, Germany, and Constantinople. Thus acquiring wealth, they became proud, and in the pride of their hearts adopted the motto: "Kto protiv Boga e Velekago Nova-gorod?" Who can resist God and the great Novgorod?

The Novgorodians prospered wonderfully. But sad trials and fatal misfortunes awaited these enterprising and independent, but proud, people. The German knights—those spurious crusaders, whose cruelty has rendered the very name of German a by-word and epithet of hate among the lower orders of Russians up to the present moment—tried hard to break the backs of the proud Novgorodians, and at the point of the sword to make them converts to Rome. Scarcely were they relieved from the outrages perpetrated by these red-cross knights, under the holy banner of the Cross of Christ, when the Tartars overran the empire, carrying the sword and oppression into every Russian home, and almost annihilating every vestige of their nationality; for although these savages never entered Novgorod the Great, yet the trade—that source of their wealth, consequently of their self-reliance and prosperity—of the great city was almost destroyed by their invasion of the neighbouring governments. Yet, again and again the brave people of Novgorod

rose superior to their troubles. Again the great "Kolokol" rang forth its merry summons to free discussion—to those able to discuss—for the benefit of all; and once more the ancient and first capital of this great empire rejoiced in the pride of her strength. But alas, alas! like Jerusalem of old, the proud city was doomed, reminding one, how forcibly! of Jeremiah's lament: "The city sits solitary that was full of people; she is become a widow; she that was great among the provinces has become a tributary. Her gates are desolate; all her beauty is departed!"

The blow that felled Novgorod to the earth, being dealt by the arm which ought to have cherished and supported her, fell with redoubled force, for she never recovered it. In 1458, John Vasilovitch III., resolving to bring the Novgorodians to their allegiance—for they refused to pay him tribute—entered the city with a large body of fighting-men, and laid it desolate. Fulfilling almost to the letter, the remarkable prophecy of Zosima, the founder of the renowned Solovetsky Monastery, who, the same day that John was born, uttered to the Bishop of Novgorod these remarkable words:—

"To Moscow has come happiness and prosperity this day, but misery and woe to our city, for a prince is born, whom they shall call John. He will lay prostrate our Novogorod at his feet,

never more to rise ; he will drive out her great ones, and make the people his slaves ! ”

John may be said to have cut out the very tongue of the people of Novgorod—the voice of 400,000 souls—for he carried off their great council-bell, which is now one of the thirty-two in the great tower of Ivan, in the Kreml, at Moscow.

But already we enter this once great city, whose still numerous spires glitter in the sunbeams, and where no heathen symbola of Tartar crescent—so usual in every Russian city—meets the eye. Novgorod the Great alone, of all the then existing Russian cities, was unpolluted by the presence of these barbarous invaders, and in commemoration thereof she elevates her cross on high, without the crescent beneath it. Already the tramp of our steeds resounds on the bridge that spans the deep-flowing Volkoff, which, like a leviathan snake, lies basking in the morning sun, coiling round the base of the old red Kreml, the gleam of its slowly-undulating waters glistening like burnished scales far below us. This curious Kreml is the first thing that arrests the attention of the traveller on entering the city, and must be an object of interest to all, not only as being one of the few remains extant of the once-powerful Novgorod the Great, but as being the first Kreml built in Russia. It is a fortified, ornamented,

and crenated wall of considerable thickness; having nine formidable towers at equal distances around it; reminding one of the walls of Troy, as represented in old editions of Homer. This first effort of fortification owes its creation to Yaroslav, one of the most esteemed of the constitutional princes of Novgorod, and was built about the year 1056. It has, however, been almost entirely rebuilt, and, although again crumbling into decay, is evidently cherished and cared for as something old and venerable not easily to be replaced. Most of the towers have some legend attached to them; one is called Packroff's Tower, and another St. Paul's, wherein are a chapel and pond. Another was the palace of the reigning prince's daughters, which was also the home of a large bird, of curious form and colour, and, it may be added, of fastidious taste; a *rara avis* in every sense of the word, for she is reported to have fed her young on the prettiest children in the neighbourhood!

Now driving through the scantily-populated streets, we drew up before the Hôtel d'Allemagne, and were immediately surrounded by nuns, in extremely unbecoming attire. They were, moreover, mostly all old, and very ugly, but so bland and persuasive was their tone of voice, and so gentle and amiably-importunate their manner, that there was no conscientious means of evading their earnest appeal to buy "for the sake of God

and the Church." Each one presented on a metal plate, covered with a fringed square of velvet, numerous bagatelles of her own handiwork, among which were several purses made of beads, so as to resemble painted china jugs of elegant form, being curiosities in the way of ladies' work.

Mounting to the first floor of the hotel, we found ourselves in a large apartment, with windows looking into two different streets, and furnished with prim German-backed chairs, and the usual mahogany-backed sofa — always concave where it should be convex, and *vica versa*—with plenty of gilding and mirror on the walls.

On requesting wash-hand apparatus, a solid silver jug and basin were brought to us; while in the centre of the large room stood a dining-table, covered with a cloth—the reverse of white, but nevertheless suggestive of a breakfast of some kind.

CHAPTER XXII.

St. Sophia of Novgorod—Painting of the Closed Hand—Pilgrims—Palace of the Great Martha—Singular Prophecy—The Famous Solovetsky Monastery—St. Vladimir's Wooden Cross—Vladimir, the Fratricide, Heathen, and Saint—His Baptism—He Receives his Sight—His Marriage with Anne of Greece—Public Baptism of the Russian People.

OUR light repast, consisting of coffee and rusks, finished, we ordered a droschkii, and while the others slept upon sofas, a couple of chairs, the floor, or anything they could get, Eudoxie and I made the tour of the old city, first driving to its chief attraction, the Archiepiscopal Cathedral of St. Sophia.

The foundation of this edifice was laid by St. Vladimir, the first Christian Prince of Russia. This act was among the last of his long life, which makes it about eight hundred years old. The generality of the Greek and Greco-Russian

churches have four cupolas, surrounding a gigantic dome; but here were six cupolas, covered with silver plates, clustering round a grand central gilt dome. On entering the sacred old edifice, we proceeded at once up the centre, and stood immediately under the great dome, which contains a curious picture, representing God the Father in the act of blessing the people as they kneel—or are supposed to kneel—on the marble pavement beneath. The hand of the outstretched arm of this picture, instead of being open, is fast closed, and the accepted story, relative to the anomaly, is this :—The painter, having duly finished his work, which represented the hand belonging to the outstretched arm as open, and the fingers outspread, was almost petrified with terror, on returning some time after, to find that the hand he had painted open, was closed ! Again and again he painted it open, but every time he returned to his work he found it closed, and so it was finally left. The ancient people of Novgorod regarded this picture with extreme veneration; and considering that the closed hand was in some way connected with their prosperity, would not, on any account, have seen it open.

It naturally occurs to one, however, that this reputed demonstration was susceptible of another reading, and that, instead of happiness and prosperity, the very reverse was indicated. Who

knows—for certainly the legend sayeth not—but that some good old Father of the Church, weary with preaching humility to the proud Novgorodians, who daily increased in riches, power, and pride until “Who can resist God and the great Novgorod” became a proverb, might have bribed the poor painter, for the truth’s sake, to close the hand, and thus convey an allegorical warning to these proud ones—viz., that God, displeased with them, had refused His blessing, and thus that they might be turned from the error of their ways ere it was too late. Riches, and consequently power, too often beget forgetfulness of Him who gives them, and the pious fathers of the newly-made Christians of Novgorod were doubtless both jealous and afraid of this formidable and increasing power over the hearts of their people; for these, the lavish parents of selfish pride, already inflated the hearts of the Novgorodians; and however justifiable a portion of this element might have been, as emanating from a people who were the architects of their own high position, it was nevertheless the cause of their downfall, having excited the fatal jealousy of John Vasilovitch.

Massive stone pillars support the interior of the cathedral, on which, as well as on the wall of the building, are hung pictures, so dark that the subjects of the majority are unintelligible. With

the conversion of the Russians to Christianity, pictures became a necessary introduction with their churches, as few even of the priests could read. This tribe of northern Slavenæ had no written form of communication until the time of Aleg, when a Greek monk, called Karilla, from Constantinople, founded the first church at Kiev, for the benefit of the numerous Greeks settled there, and invented those Slavonic characters, so like the Greek, now used in all books of Holy Writ. By means, therefore, of these pictures, Scripture history was rendered so far intelligible to the people at large. The old ebony and mahogany-hued paintings on the great square pillars of St. Sophia, enshrouded in perpetual gloom—for the diminutive windows admit a mere shade of hazy twilight—had the most mysterious effect, which was increased by the distant mumble of the priests, and by the musical intonation with which a younger member of the body read the gospels; together with the outburst of the heavenly chant; the fragrant incense; and the prostrations of the devout, many of them beggars and nuns. Groups of pious pilgrims, too, were constantly arriving in their quaint attire. These last were to me a new feature in Russian experience, as I regarded them now for the first time; but the summer traveller constantly encounters little groups of these good people—chiefly women—journeying on foot

through the empire in all directions. Ever placid and serene, though always weary and foot-sore, on they trudge, blessing you as they pass by. Arrayed in the pilgrim's garb, a loose blouse of white serge, like a flannel dressing-gown, tied round the waist and provided with a hood. Their shoes are of plaited bass, tied on with sandals of the same, twisted like twine. Each is provided with a staff and scrip, and a large-bodied small bottle, in which to carry water by the way. Thus simply equipped, they make incredibly long journeys; some of those we met in the fane of St. Sophia being bound for the celebrated Troitza Lavra, near Moscow; and not a few, as far the shrine of St. Metrophann at Voronetz, between eleven and twelve hundred versts hence. What would the ancients, in the old coaching days, have thought of feats of this kind—those, for instance, who made their wills on leaving York for London, or Edinburgh for Aberdeen? These pedestrian excursions are as customary as the observance of religion itself, and as old as the institutions which have evoked them; and are deemed so much a matter of course, that far from exciting the least surprise or interest on their behalf, the well-bred Russian seems amused at the astonishment expressed by the stranger, that these frail women—most of them past the meridian of life—should have the

moral as well as physical courage to undertake such journeys, and on foot too.

Remounting our droschkii, we drove for some distance, jerking dreadfully over the unevenly-paved streets, stopping at length before the ruins of a small mean building. But this spot is one of the lions of Novgorod; for these ruins mark the site of the once gay Palace of the famous Martha, known as "the great lady of Novgorod," one of the most remarkable women of the fifteenth century; in whose time the city was destroyed by John, her own downfall having been foretold, in a remarkable manner, by a very remarkable man; the particulars of which—translated from Miss Eshemoff's history of Russia—are as follow:—

"A wild tribe, inhabiting the banks of the Dvina, had pillaged the Solovetsky Monastery, and the old superior, Zosima, made a journey to Novogorod, to complain of this outrage to the Vyet-she, and to seek the protection of the Novogorodians. The council heard his complaint, and promised him a guard of fighting men for the defence of the monastery, and at the same time made certain laws for the benefit of this distant island settlement. His business thus terminated, the father prepared for his return home, but the people of Novogorod, wishing to show him attention, begged that he would delay his departure, and thus afford them the opportunity of testify-

ing their hospitality towards him. Accordingly, Zosima was *fêted* and loaded with presents by the most distinguished in the city, the haughty Martha alone excepted. For some reason, best known to herself, the Great Lady did not feel kindly disposed to the old man, and therefore had not invited him to her palace; but, on hearing his praises sounded on all sides, she repented, and at the last moment asked him to a banquet, at which all the chiefs of the land were present. In order to make amends for her want of courtesy in the first instance, she was most lavish of her attention to him on the occasion, and as a parting gift she presented Zosima with two valuable estates, called Kemi and Soumou.*

* Kemi and Soumou are still known under these names. Kemi is a town, situated on the mainland, about fifty versts from the Solovetsky Monastery, and Soumou is a rich plantation, from which the British navy is largely supplied with spars. The Solovetsky Monastery is one of the most ancient and revered religious establishments in Russia. It is situated on an island in the White Sea, about fifty miles from the mainland, and is the same which the English attacked in 1854. Associated, as the Solovetsky is, with some of their most cherished remembrances, this attack on so sacred a spot roused up in every Russian heart the utmost contempt for our name and principles, and no incident of the late war contributed more to satisfy our brave foe of the justice of his cause; unfortunately, it penetrated deeper than political incidents in Russia generally do. *It touched the quick*, for it reached the heart of the *masses*, and a hundred years will not suffice to wipe out the bitter remembrance of that event.

“The humble old man was quite overcome by the generosity of Martha. It was remarked, however that Zosima was silent and sorrowful, and, as the feast proceeded and the hilarity increased, he frequently buried his face in his hands, and wiped away the tears which trickled down his furrowed cheeks, sighing deeply. All saw his sadness, but hesitated to ask the cause, it being obvious that he did not wish to be questioned; but one of the young monks who attended him, no longer able to restrain his solicitude, entreated of him why he thus mourned?

“‘Woe is me,’ replied Zosima, ‘that I should behold a picture so terrible. Alas! alas! six of these chiefs, who now sit at meat with us, shall suffer death for their pride. This house, now so full of life, and feasting, and mirth, shall soon be empty and desolate; its greatness, and the greatness of her who rules therein, shall pass away like a cloud and be seen no more.’”

But a short time elapsed ere the prediction of Zosima was verified to the letter, for the Great Lady of Novogorod, as the chief rival of John,

Another sacred spot in this frigid region, and said to be an offshoot of the Solovetsky, is the church, founded by St. Tryphon in the sixteenth century, and dedicated by him to the saints Boris and Gleb. This is in Russian Lapland, near a small place called Kola, which the English have twice attacked, and the last time almost destroyed.

was, at the sack of the city, driven out with all her people; the whole of her immense wealth he confiscated, and her palace, once so famous, became empty and desolate. And as Zosima had said, the six noblemen who had sat at meat with him, and whose deaths he had foretold, refusing to acknowledge John as their liege lord, were decapitated at their own doors.

The ruin now marking this once famous spot is that of a blacksmith's shop, but as if the Furies—who scoured this *locale* in the days of John—still haunted the spot, once the scene of their ravaging exploits, the poor blacksmith had no peace, but was so perfectly besieged in his little shop by people desirous of carrying off some *souvenir* of a place so remarkable, that his tools, and his very clothes, disappeared. Therefore, breaking up his small establishment, he removed to a distance, and the place fell into decay. Novgorod is divided by the Volkoff into the commercial quarter, and that of St. Sophia; these are connected by a handsome bridge of granite, of singular construction, which spans the river diagonally, and is 117 feet long.*

At one end of this bridge is a chapel, in which is kept the great wooden cross carried by St. Vladimir when he laid the foundation of St. Sophia.

* A model of this bridge was exhibited in the Exhibition at London, of 1851.

Formerly, on the site now occupied by this chapel, stood Peroun, the chief idol of the Russians, a hideous monster, with a silver head, and one eye in the middle of it. Great was the esteem of the Novgorodians for this beauty, but, happily, greater still was the influence exercised over them by this same Vladimir, their *crasnoë solne-che-vo*, or "red son," as they called him. At his bidding, his people cast this Cyclopean monster into the waters of the Volkoff, which he had been so often propitiated with gifts and rich offerings to bless to them.

The history of St Vladimir's conversion to Christianity is one of the most romantic of the many romantic episodes of Russian history. Originally an idolator, a fratricide, and an assassin, he revelled in war, as the chief end of man's life; and the last acts of his wicked career were to take to himself the affianced wife of his brother, whom he had murdered, as he did also her father and brothers; and to wrench Gallicia from the King of Poland and Cherson—or, according to the Russian, Herr-son—from the Emperor of Greece. But Vladimir the Saint, was born for better things. Disgusted with his life, he was led to consider that higher power within himself, of the great destiny of which he was as yet ignorant. Like his grandmother, St. Olga, he felt that his gods of wood and stone, the work of men's hands,

could not help him in the doubts and perplexities which now filled his mind. But where was he to learn the truth?

Vladimir was at this time sole ruler in Russia, "Veleekim Kness Kievskim," or Great Prince of Kiev—his elder brother, Aleg, the son of Svatoslav, having been the first who enjoyed this title. And in Kiev there dwelt Greeks, Catholics, and Mahometans, but the bewildered Prince knew not which of their creeds to adopt as his standard of faith, and therefore he sent ambassadors to the different countries of Europe, resolving to embrace that form of religion which he thought would suit his people best. That of the Greeks pleased him, and he resolved to adopt it. But here another difficulty arose. Since the days of Aleg, the Regent, who had so unceremoniously presented himself at the gates of Constantinople, the Greeks rather feared the Russians, which feeling he had but served to strengthen by his own recent conquest of Cherson. How, therefore, could he stoop to seek instruction in their religion from those he had vanquished? A lucky thought struck him, and he sent to demand the hand of the beautiful Anne—the sister of Constantine, Emperor of Greece—in marriage, and with it, her religion; for he felt that, in having the Emperor for his brother-in-law, he need not feel ashamed to be taught by him.

Anne, almost frantic at the idea of wedding a savage, at first refused, although the fall of Constantinople was the penalty Vladimir had threatened, in case of such a result. But, at the entreaties of her brother, the gentle Anne yielded, and, for her country and religion, gave herself a living sacrifice to the heathen.

At Cherson, Vladimir was to meet his bride, who, with many tears, took leave of her brothers, and, accompanied by a large suite of ladies and a conclave of priests, she took ship for her new home. The delighted inhabitants of Cherson—so lately her brother's subjects—came out with loud rejoicings to meet the Princess, but none there waited her coming with so much anxiety as the regenerate Vladimir, although, alas! he was unable to see his bride, for he had suddenly become blind. Before marrying him, Anne begged that he would be baptised. He obeyed, weeping for joy the while, that the Grecian Princess had accepted him, and, even as the hand of the patriarch rested in benediction on his head, Vladimir's eyes received their sight, and he looked for the first time upon the magnificence of the house of God, and upon his beautiful bride!

Anne, together with the assembled multitude, fell on her knees and praised God. The Russian nobles who accompanied the great prince, and had witnessed this miracle, desired also to be

baptised. Anne no longer wept, for Vladimir was of noble stature and gentle mien. She rejoiced in her handsome husband, and as a Christian woman, was grateful that, through her means, Christianity had been introduced to him and to his people.

On the return of the Prince to Kiev, he ordered the idols to be cut up and burnt; "Peroun," the principal one, in which he had so delighted, he caused to be tied by his silver head to the tail of a horse, and galloped through the city, after which, Vladimir himself flung his old favourite into the Dnieper.

The following day, all the people of Kiev, men, women, and children, a mighty multitude, were baptised in this Russian Jordan, the adults walking in, and the children being carried by their parents. The happy Vladimir and his family witnessed the interesting scene from the banks of the river, gazing on this momentous event with mingled feelings of joy, love, and gratitude. Nor was Novgorod—the former possession of the now great Prince—behind in the public rejoicings, and in the destruction of her idols, for her Peroun also met a watery fate, after being subjected to manifold indignities.

The Novgorodians deeply mourned the death of Vladimir; the poor wept for the loss of their best friend, and the rich for the prosperity and gaiety

they had enjoyed under his rule. Long, long after his demise, they talked of "those happy days in the time of the great St. Vladimir," and many were the verses composed thereon, not a few of which are sung by the peasants of the present day, as they labour in the fields. Not only were his acts recorded, but his very words were registered when he received guests. On these occasions, the Great Prince and his family entertained them in the most hospitable manner, and, when large potations from the tankards of mead* rendered the *convives* loquacious and disposed to speak their minds freely, the Prince never became angry. At one of these dinners, a nobleman remarked that he thought it derogatory for a Russian Prince to set wooden spoons before his guests. Vladimir instantly ordered silver ones to be made, and the next time he met his nobles at his own table, he said, addressing himself to the one who had complained of the wooden spoons:—

"For silver and gold, friends cannot be bought,
But for friends, both silver and gold can easily be got."

In Novgorod are many localities, now known only to the initiated, replete with interesting historical associations, and which we might have ferreted out, had time permitted; one cursory glance, however, ere we turn

* Mead was, and still is, in some degree, the national beverage of the Russians.

hotel-wards, to that commercial side of the broad river, and as near as possible to the exact spot where, 800 years ago, stood the Palace of the famous, and still-revered Yaroslav, the noble son of the great St. Vladimir; but the interesting story connected with one of his daughters, I must leave for another chapter.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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